M. LERMONTOV

A HERO of OUR TIME

"...We shall not praise this book, for praise would be just as needless as abuse would be harmless. Nobody and nothing could hinder its appearance or circulation until the last copy is sold."

VISSARION BELINSKY

*

"*A Hero of Our Time* is a book comprising five stories—'Bela,' 'Maxim Maximych,' 'Taman,' 'Princess Mary,' and 'The Fatalist'—linked by a single subject. In it Lermontov describes Pechorin, the hero of the day, of a terrible era, a wasted, cruel, and useless man, who passes indifferently by majestic landscapes and plain but wonderful people with pure hearts. In his five stories he reveals perfect art, which is real, wise, masterly in style and delightful."

ALEXEI TOLSTOI

6TH WORLD FESTIVAL OF YOUTH AND STUDENTS
For Peace and Friendship
MOSCOW 1957

М. Лермонтов

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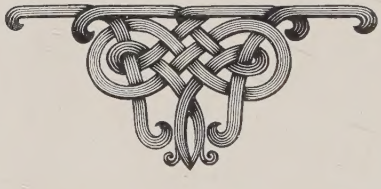
М. ЛЕРМОНТОВ

ГЕРОЙ НАШЕГО ВРЕМЕНИ



ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ
НА ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКАХ
МОСКВА

M. LERMONTOV

A HERO OF OUR TIME

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THE FOREWORD is at once the first and the last thing in any book; it serves either to explain the purpose of the work or to justify the author before his critics. Ordinarily, however, readers are concerned with neither the moral nor the journalistic attacks on the author; hence they do not read forewords. Yet it is a pity it should be so, especially in our country. Our public is still so immature and simple-hearted that it does not understand a fable unless it finds the moral at the end. It fails to grasp a joke or sense in irony; it is simply brought up badly. It is as yet unaware that obvious invective has no place in respectable society and respectable books, that contemporary enlightenment has devised a sharper, almost invisible but nevertheless deadly weapon, which under the guise of flattery deals a true, unparriable blow. Our public is like the provincial who overhearing a conversation between two diplomats belonging to hostile courts carries off the conviction that each is deceiving his government for the sake of a tender mutual friendship.

The present book recently had the misfortune of being taken literally by some readers and even some magazines. Some were frightfully offended in all seriousness at being given a man as amoral as the Hero of Our Time for a model; others delicately hinted that the author had drawn portraits of himself and his acquaintances. . . . A threadbare witticism! But apparent-

ly Russia is so constituted that however she may progress in every other respect, she is unable to get rid of absurdities like this. With us the most fantastic of fairy tales has hardly a chance of escaping criticism as an attempt at libel!

A Hero of Our Time, my dear sirs, is indeed a portrait, but not of one man; it is a portrait built up of all our generation's vices in full bloom. You will again tell me that a human being cannot be so wicked, and I shall reply that if you can believe in the existence of all the villains of tragedy and romance, why should you not believe that there was a Pechorin? If you could admire far more terrifying and repulsive types, why are you not more merciful to this character, even if it is fictitious? Is it not because there is more truth in it than you might wish?

You say that morality will gain nothing by it. I beg to differ. People have been fed enough sweetmeats to upset their stomachs; now bitter remedies, acid truths, are needed. Yet you should not think that the author of this book was ever ambitious enough to aspire to reform human vices. May God preserve him from such boorishness! It simply pleased him to portray the modern man as he sees him and as he so often, to his own and your misfortune, has found him to be. Suffice it that the disease has been diagnosed, how to cure it the Lord alone knows!

PART ONE

I

BELA

I WAS travelling along the post road from Tiflis. The only luggage in the carriage was one small portmanteau half-full of travel notes about Georgia. Fortunately for you the greater part of them has been lost since then, though luckily for me the case and the rest of the things in it have survived.

The sun was already slipping behind a snow-capped ridge when I drove into Koishaur Valley. The Ossetian coachman, singing at the top of his voice, urged his horses on relentlessly to reach the summit of Koishaur Mountain before nightfall. What a glorious spot this valley is! All around it tower formidable mountains, reddish crags draped with hanging ivy and crowned with clusters of plane-trees, yellow cliffs grooved by torrents, with a gilded fringe of snow high above, while down below the Aragva embraces a nameless stream that noisily bursts forth from a black, gloom-filled gorge, and then stretches in a silvery ribbon into the distance, its surface shimmering like the scaly back of a snake.

On reaching the foot of Koishaur Mountain we stopped outside a *dukhan** where some twenty Georgians and mountaineers made up a noisy assemblage; nearby a camel caravan had halted for the night. I had to hire oxen to haul my carriage to the top of the confounded mountain for it was already autumn and a thin layer of ice covered the ground, and the climb was about two versts in length.

There was nothing for it but to hire six oxen and several Ossetians. One of them hoisted my portmanteau on his shoulder and the others set to helping the oxen along, doing little more than shout, however.

Behind my carriage came another, pulled by four oxen with no visible exertion although the vehicle was piled high with baggage. This rather surprised me. In the wake of the carriage walked its owner, puffing at a small silver-inlaid Kabardian pipe. He was wearing an officer's coat without epaulettes and a shaggy Cherkess cap. He looked about fifty, his swarthy face betrayed a long acquaintanceship with the Caucasian sun, and his prematurely grey moustache belied his firm step and vigorous appearance. I went up to him and bowed; he silently returned my greeting, blowing out an enormous cloud of smoke.

"I take it we are fellow-travellers?"

He bowed again, but did not say a word.

"I suppose you are going to Stavropol?"

"Yes, sir, I am ... with some government baggage."

"Will you please explain to me how it is that four oxen easily manage to pull your heavy carriage while six beasts can barely haul my empty one with the help of all these Ossetians?"

He smiled shrewdly, casting an appraising glance at me.

"I daresay you haven't been long in the Caucasus?"

"About a year," I replied.

He smiled again.

"Why do you ask?"

* Caucasian tavern.

"No particular reason, sir. They're terrific rogues, these Asiatics! You don't think their yelling helps much, do you? You can't tell what the devil they're saying. But the oxen understand them all right; hitch up twenty of the beasts if you wish and they won't budge once those fellows begin yelling in their tongue.... Terrific cheats, they are. And what can you do to them? They do like to skin the traveller. Spoiled, they are, the scoundrels ... you'll see they'll make you tip them too. I know them by now, they won't fool me!"

"Have you served long in these parts?"

"Yes, ever since Alexei Petrovich* was here," he replied, drawing himself up. "When he arrived at the line I was a sublieutenant, and under him was promoted twice for service against the mountaineers."

"And now?"

"Now I am in the third line battalion. And you, may I ask?"

I told him.

This brought the conversation to an end and we walked along side by side in silence. On top of the mountain we ran into snow. The sun set and night followed day without any interval in between as is usual in the South; thanks to the glistening snow, however, we could easily pick out the road which still continued to climb, though less steeply than before. I gave orders to put my portmanteau in the carriage and replace the oxen with horses, and turned to look back at the valley down below for the last time, but a thick mist that rolled in waves from the gorges blanketed it completely and not a single sound reached us from its depths. The Ossetians vociferously besieged me, demanding money for vodka; but the captain shouted at them so fiercely that they dispersed in a moment.

"You see what they are like!" he grumbled. "They don't know enough Russian to ask for a piece of bread, but they've learned to beg for tips:

* Yermolov—General Alexei Petrovich Yermolov, governor-general of Georgia from 1817 till 1827.

'Officer, give me money for vodka!' To me the Tatars are better—they're teetotalers at least. . . ."

Another verst remained to the post station. It was quiet all around, so quiet that you could trace the flight of a mosquito by its buzz. A deep gorge yawned black to the left; beyond it and ahead of us the dark-blue mountain peaks wrinkled with gorges and gullies and topped by layers of snow loomed against the pale horizon that still retained the last glimmer of twilight. Stars began to twinkle in the dark sky, and strangely enough it seemed that they were far higher here than in our northern sky. On both sides of the road naked black boulders jutted up from the ground, and here and there some shrubs peeped from under the snow; not a single dead leaf rustled, and it was pleasant to hear in the midst of this lifeless somnolence of nature the snorting of the tired post horses and the uneven tinkling of the Russian carriage bells.

"Tomorrow will be a fine day," I observed, but the captain did not reply. Instead he pointed to a tall mountain rising directly ahead of us.

"What's that?" I asked.

"Mount Goud."

"Yes?"

"See how it smokes?"

Indeed, Mount Goud was smoking; light wisps of mist crept along its sides while a black cloud rested on the summit, so black that it stood out as a blotch even against the dark sky.

We could already make out the post station and the roofs of the huts around it, and welcoming lights were dancing ahead when the gusts of cold raw wind came whistling down the gorge and it began to drizzle. Barely had I thrown a felt cape over my shoulders than the snow came. I looked at the captain with respect now. . . .

"We'll have to stay here overnight," he said, annoyed. "You can't journey through the hills in a blizzard like this. See any avalanches on Krestovaya?" he asked a coachman.

"No, sir," the Ossetian replied. "But there's a lot just waiting to come down."

As there was no room for travellers at the post house, we were given lodgings in a smoky hut. I invited my fellow-traveller to join me at tea for I had with me a cast-iron tea-kettle—my sole comfort on my Caucasian travels.

The hut was built against a cliff. Three wet, slippery steps led up to the door. I groped my way in and stumbled upon a cow, for these people have a cowshed for an anteroom. I could not make out where to go; on one side sheep were bleating and on the other a dog growled. Fortunately a glimmer of light showed through the gloom and guided me to another opening that looked like a door. Here a rather interesting scene confronted me: the spacious hut with a roof supported by two smoke-blackened posts was full of people. A fire built on the bare earth crackled in the middle and the smoke, forced back by the wind through the opening in the roof, hung so thick that it took some time before I could distinguish anything around me. By the fire sat two old women, a swarm of children and a lean Georgian man, all of them dressed in tatters. There was nothing to do but to make ourselves comfortable by the fire and light up our pipes, and soon the tea-kettle was singing merrily.

"Pitiable creatures!" I observed to the captain, nodding toward our grimy hosts who stared at us silently with something like stupefaction.

"A dull-witted people," he replied. "Believe me, they can't do a thing, nor can they learn anything either. Our Kabardians or Chechens, rogues and vagabonds though they be, are at least good fighters, whereas these take no interest even in arms: you won't find a decent dagger on a single one of them. But what can you expect from Ossetians!"

"Were you long in Chechna?"

"Quite a while—ten years garrisoning a fort with a company, out Kamenny Brod way. Do you know the place?"

"Heard of it."

"Yes, sir, we had enough of the ruffians; now, thank God, things are quieter, but there was a time when you couldn't venture a hundred paces beyond the rampart without some hairy devil stalking you, ready to put a halter around your neck or a bullet through the back of your head the moment he caught you napping. But they were stout fellows anyway."

"You must have had a good many adventures?" I asked, spurred by curiosity.

"Aye, many indeed. . . ."

Thereupon he began to pluck at the left tip of his moustache, his head drooped and he sank into deep thought. I very badly wanted to get some sort of story out of him—a desire that is natural to anyone who travels about, recording things. In the meantime the tea came to a boil; I dug out two traveller's tumblers from my portmanteau, poured out tea and placed one before the captain. He took a sip and muttered as if to himself: "Yes, many indeed!" The exclamation raised my hopes, for I knew that Caucasian old-timers like to talk; they seldom have a chance to do so, for a man may be stationed a full five years with a company somewhere in the backwoods without anyone to greet him with a "Good day" (that mode of address does not belong to the sergeant's vocabulary). And there is so much to talk about: the wild, strange people all around, the constant dangers, and the remarkable adventures; one cannot help thinking it is a pity that we record so little of it.

"'Would you care to add a little rum?" I asked. "I have some white rum from Tiflis, it will warm you up in this cold."

"No, thanks, I don't drink."

"How is that?"

"Well . . . swore off the stuff. Once when I was still a sublieutenant we went on a bit of a spree, you know how it happens, and that very night there was an alarm. So we showed up before the ranks on the gay side, and there was the devil to pay when Alexei Petrovich found out. Lord preserve me from seeing a man as furious as he was; we escaped being court-martialled by a hair's breadth. That's the way it is: sometimes you got to spend

a whole year without seeing anyone, and if you take to drink you're done for."

On hearing this I nearly lost hope.

"Take even the Cherkess," he went on. "As soon as they drink their fill of *boza* at a wedding or a funeral the fight begins. Once I barely managed to escape alive although I was the guest of a peaceable prince."

"How did it happen?"

"Well," he filled and lit his pipe, took a long draw on it, and began the story, "you see, I was stationed at the time at a fort beyond the Terek with a company—that was nearly five years back. Once in the autumn a convoy came with foodstuffs, and with it an officer, a young man of about twenty-five. He reported to me in full dress uniform and announced that he had been ordered to join me at the fort. He was so slim and pale and his uniform so immaculate that I could tell at once that he was a newcomer to the Caucasus. 'You must have been transferred here from Russia?' I asked him. 'Yes, sir,' he replied. I took his hand and said: 'Glad to have you here, very glad. It'll be a bit dull for you ... but we'll get along very well, I'm sure. Call me simply Maxim Maximych, if you like, and, another thing, you need not bother wearing full dress uniform. Just come around in your forage cap.' He was shown his quarters and he settled down in the fort."

"What was his name?" I asked Maxim Maximych.

"Grigori Alexandrovich *Pechorin.* A fine chap he was, I assure you, though a bit queer. For instance, he would spend days on end hunting in rain or cold; everybody else would be chilled and exhausted, but not he. Yet sometimes a mere draught in his room would be enough for him to claim he had caught cold; a banging shutter might make him start and turn pale, yet I myself saw him go at a wild boar single-handed; sometimes you couldn't get a word out of him for hours on end, but when he occasionally did start telling stories you'd split your sides laughing.... Yes, sir, a most curious sort of fellow he was, and, apparently, rich too, judging by the quantity of expensive trinkets he had."

"How long was he with you?" I asked.

"A good year. That was a memorable year for me; he caused me plenty of trouble, God forgive him! But after all, there are people who are predestined to have all sorts of odd things happen to them!"

"Odd things?" I exclaimed eagerly as I poured him some more tea.

"I'll tell you the story. Some six versts from the fort there lived a peaceable prince. His son, a lad of about fifteen, got into the habit of riding over to see us; not a day passed that he didn't come for one reason or another. Grigori Alexandrovich and I really spoiled him. What a scapegrace he was, ready for anything, whether it was to lean down from his saddle to pick up a cap from the ground while galloping by or to try his hand at marksmanship. But there was one bad thing about him: he had a terrible weakness for money. Once for a joke Grigori Alexandrovich promised him a gold piece if he stole the best goat from his father's herd, and what do you think? The very next night he dragged the animal in by the horns. Sometimes, if we just tried teasing him, he would flare up and reach for his dagger. 'Your head's too hot for your own good, Azamat,' I would tell him. 'That's *yaman** for your topknot!'

"Once the old prince himself came over to invite us to a wedding; he was giving away his elder daughter and since we were *kunaks*** there was no way of declining, you know, Tatar or not. So we set out. A pack of barking dogs met us in the village. On seeing us the women hid themselves; the faces we did catch a glimpse of were far from pretty. 'I had a much better opinion of Cherkess women,' Grigori Alexandrovich said to me. 'You wait a while,' I replied, smiling. I had something up my sleeve.

"There was quite a crowd assembled in the prince's house. It's the custom among Asiatics, you know, to invite to their weddings everyone they chance to meet. We were welcomed with all due honours and shown to the best room. Before going in, though, I took care to note where they put our horses, just in case something unforeseen happened, you know."

* Tatar for "bad."

** *Kunak* means friend.

"How do they celebrate weddings?" I asked the captain.

"Oh, in the usual way. First the mullah reads them something from the Koran, then presents are given to the newly-weds and all their relatives. They eat and drink *boza*, until finally the horsemanship display begins, and there is always some kind of filthy, tattered creature riding a mangy lame nag playing the buffoon to amuse the company. Later, when it grows dark, what we would call a ball begins in the best room. Some miserable old man strums away on a three-stringed ... can't remember what they call it ... something like our balalaika. The girls and young men line up in two rows facing each other, clap their hands and sing. Then one of the girls and a man step into the centre and begin to chant verses to each other improvising as they go while the rest pick up the refrain. Pechorin and I occupied the place of honour, and as we sat there the host's younger daughter, a girl of sixteen or so, came up to him and sang to him .... what should I call it ... a sort of compliment."

"You don't remember what she sang by any chance?"

"Yes, I think it went something like this: 'Our young horsemen are stalwart and their coats are encrusted with silver, but the young Russian officer is more stalwart still and his epaulettes are of gold. He is like a poplar among the others, yet he shall neither grow nor bloom in our orchard.' Pechorin rose, bowed to her, pressing his hand to his forehead and heart, and asked me to reply to her. Knowing their language well I translated his reply.

"When she walked away I whispered to Grigori Alexandrovich: 'Well, what do you think of her?'

" 'Exquisite,' replied he. 'What is her name?' 'Her name is Bela,' I replied.

"And indeed, she was beautiful: tall, slim, and her eyes as black as a chamois looked right into your soul. Pechorin grew pensive and did not take his eyes off her, and she frequently stole a glance at him. But Pechorin was not the only one who admired the pretty princess: from a corner of the room another pair of eyes, fixed and flaming, stared at her. I looked closer

and recognized my old acquaintance Kazbich. He was a man you couldn't say was friendly, though there was nothing to show he was hostile towards us. There were a good many suspicions but he was never caught at any trickery. Occasionally he brought rams to us at the fort and sold them cheap, but he never bargained: you had to pay him what he asked; he would never cut a price even if his life depended on it. It was said about him that he would ride out beyond the Kuban with the *abreks*,* and to tell the truth, he did look like a brigand: he was short, wiry and broad-shouldered. And clever he was, as clever as the devil! The *beshmet*** he wore was always torn and patched, but his weapons were set in silver. As for his horse, it was famous in all Kabarda, and indeed, you couldn't think of a better horse. The horsemen all around had very good reason to envy him, and time and again they tried to steal the animal, but in vain. I can still see that horse as if it were before me now: as black as pitch, with legs like taut violin strings and eyes no worse than Bela's. He was a strong animal too, could gallop fifty versts at a stretch, and as for training, he would follow his master like a dog and even recognized his voice. Kazbich never bothered to tether the animal. A regular brigand horse!

"That evening Kazbich was more morose than I had ever seen him, and I noticed that he had a coat of mail under his *beshmet*. 'There must be a reason for the armour,' thought I. 'He is evidently scheming something.'

"It was stuffy indoors, so I stepped out into the fresh air. The night was settling on the hills and the mist was beginning to weave in and out among the gorges.

"It occurred to me to look into the shelter where our horses stood and see whether they were being fed, besides which caution is never amiss. After all, I had a fine horse and a good many Kabardians had cast fond glances at him and said: *'Yakshi tkhe, chok yakshi!'****

* Mountaineers who either singly or in small groups waged guerilla warfare against the conquerors.

** Short quilted caftan.

*** Tatar for "Good horse, very good."

"I was picking my way along the fence when suddenly I heard voices; one of the speakers I recognized right away: it was that scapegrace Azamat, our host's son. The other spoke more slowly and quietly. 'I wonder what they're up to,' thought I. 'I hope it's not about my horse.' I dropped down behind the fence and cocked my ears, trying not to miss a word. It was impossible to catch everything, for now and then the singing and the hum of voices from the hut drowned out the conversation I was so interested to hear.

" 'That's a fine horse you have,' Azamat was saying. 'Were I the master of my house and the owner of a drove of three hundred mares, I'd give half of them for your horse, Kazbich!'

" 'So it's Kazbich,' thought I and remembered the coat of mail.

" 'You're right,' Kazbich replied after a momentary silence, 'you won't find another like him in all Kabarda. Once, beyond the Terek it was, I rode with the *abreks* to pick up some Russian horses. We were unlucky though, and had to scatter. Four Cossacks came after me; I could already hear the *gyaurs** shouting behind me, and ahead of me was a thicket. I bent low in the saddle, trusted myself to Allah and for the first time in my life insulted the horse by striking him. Like a bird he flew between the branches; the thorns tore my clothes and the dry karagach twigs lashed my face. The horse leapt over stumps and crashed through the brush chest on. It would have been better for me to slip off him in some glade and take cover in the woods on foot, but I could not bear to part with him so I held on, and the Prophet rewarded me. Some bullets whistled past overhead; I could hear the Cossacks, now dismounted, running along my trail.... Suddenly a deep gully opened up in front; my horse hesitated for a moment, and then jumped. But on the other side his hind legs slipped off the sheer edge and he was left holding on by the forelegs. I dropped the reins and slipped into the gully. This saved the horse, who managed to pull himself up. The Cossacks saw all this, but none of them came down into the ravine to look for me; they probably gave me up for dead. Then I heard

* Term of opprobrium among Moslems for unbelievers meaning "infidel dog."

them going after my horse. My heart bled as I crawled through the thick grass of the gully until I was out of the woods. Now I saw some Cossacks riding out from the thicket into the open and my Karagöz galloping straight at them. With a shout they made a dash for him. They chased him for a long time. One of them almost got a halter around his neck once or twice; I trembled, turned away and began praying. Looking up a few moments later I saw my Karagöz flying free as the wind, his tail streaming while the *gyaurs* trailed far behind in the plain on their exhausted horses. I swear by Allah this is the truth! I sat in my gully until far into the night. And what do you think happened, Azamat? Suddenly through the darkness I heard a horse running along the brink of the gully, snorting, neighing and stamping his hoofs; I recognized the voice of my Karagöz, for it was he, my comrade! Since then we have never parted.'

"You could hear the man patting the smooth neck of the horse and addressing him with all kinds of endearments.

" 'Had I a drove of a thousand mares,' said Azamat, 'I would give it to you for your Karagöz.'

" '*Yok*,* I wouldn't take it,' replied Kazbich indifferently.

" 'Listen, Kazbich,' Azamat coaxed him. 'You are a good man and a brave *jigit*; my father fears the Russians and does not let me go into the mountains. Give me your horse and I will do anything you want, I'll steal for you my father's best musket or sabre, whatever you wish—and his sabre is a real *gurda*,** lay the blade against your hand and it will cut deep into the flesh; mail like yours won't stop it.'

"Kazbich was silent.

" 'When I first saw your horse,' Azamat went on, 'prancing under you, his nostrils dilated and sparks flying under his hoofs, something strange happened in my soul, and I lost interest in everything. I have disdained my father's best horses, ashamed to be seen riding them, and I have been sick at

* "No."

** A particular kind of sabre of excellent workmanship.

heart. In my misery I have spent days on end sitting on a crag, thinking of nothing but your fleet-footed Karagöz with his proud stride and sleek back as straight as an arrow, his blazing eyes looking straight into mine as if he wanted to speak to me. I shall die, Kazbich, if you will not sell him to me,' said Azamat in a trembling voice.

"I thought I heard him sob; and I must tell you that Azamat was a most stubborn lad and even when he was younger nothing could ever make him cry.

"In reply to his tears I heard something like a laugh.

" 'Listen!' said Azamat his voice firm now. 'You see I am ready to do anything. I could steal my sister for you if you want. How she can dance and sing! And her gold embroidery is something wonderful! The Turkish Padishah himself never had a wife like her. If you want her, wait for me tomorrow night in the gorge where the stream flows; I shall go by with her on the way to the next village—and she'll be yours. Isn't Bela worth your steed?'

"For a long, long time Kazbich was silent. At last instead of replying, he began softly singing an old song:*

Ours are the fairest of maidens that be:
Eyes like the stars, by their light do I see.
Sweet flits the time when we cosset a maid,
Sweeter's the freedom of any young blade.
Wives by the dozen are purchased with gold,
A mettlesome steed is worth riches untold;
Swift o'er the plains like a whirlwind he flies,
Never betrays you, and never tells lies.

"In vain Azamat pleaded with him; he tried tears, flattery, and cajolery, until finally Kazbich lost patience with him:

* I apologize to my readers for having put Kazbich's song, which of course was told me in prose, into verse; but habit is second nature. *Author's note.*

" 'Get away with you, boy! Are you mad? You could never ride my horse! He'd throw you after the first three paces and you'd smash your head against a rock.'

" 'Me?' Azamat screamed in a fury, and his child's dagger rang against the coat of mail. A strong arm flung him back and he fell against the wattle fence so violently that it shook. 'Now the fun will begin,' thought I and dashed into the stable, bridled our horses and led them to the yard at the back. Two minutes later a terrific uproar broke out in the hut. This is what happened: Azamat ran into the hut in a torn *beshmet* shouting that Kazbich had tried to kill him. Everybody rushed out and went for their rifles—and the fun was on! There was screaming and shouting and shots were fired, but Kazbich was already on his horse spinning around like a demon in the midst of the crowd and warding off assailants with his sabre. 'Bad business to get mixed up in this,' said I to Grigori Alexandrovich as I caught him by the arm. 'Hadn't we better clear out as fast as we can?'

" 'Let's wait a bit and see how it ends.'

" 'It's sure to end badly; that's what always happens with these Asiatics, as soon as they have their fill of drink they go slashing each other.' We mounted and rode home."

"What happened to Kazbich?" I asked impatiently.

"What can happen to these people?" replied the captain, finishing his glass of tea. "He got away, of course."

"Not even wounded, was he?" I asked.

"The Lord only knows. They're tough, the rogues! I have seen some of them in engagements; a man may be cut up into ribbons with bayonets and still he continues brandishing his sabre." After a brief silence the captain went on, stamping his foot:

"There is one thing I'll never forgive myself for. When we got back to the fort, some devil prompted me to tell Grigori Alexandrovich what I had overheard behind the fence. He laughed—the fox—though he was already cooking up a scheme."

"What was it? I should like to hear it."

"I suppose I'll have to tell you. Since I began telling the story, I might as well finish.

"Some four days later Azamat rode up to the fort. As usual, he went in to see Grigori Alexandrovich, who always had some delicacies for him. I was there too. The talk turned to horses, and Pechorin began to praise Kazbich's horse; as spirited and beautiful as a chamois the steed was, and as Pechorin put it, there simply was no other horse like it in all the world.

"The Tatar boy's eyes lit up, but Pechorin pretended not to notice it; I tried to change the subject, but at once he brought it back to Kazbich's horse. This happened each time Azamat came. About three weeks later I noticed that Azamat was growing pale and wasting away as they do from love in novels. What was it all about?

"You see, I got the whole story later. Grigori Alexandrovich egged him on to a point when the lad was simply desperate. Finally he put it point-blank: 'I can see, Azamat, that you want that horse very badly. Yet you have as little chance of getting it as of seeing the back of your own head. Now tell me what would you give if someone gave it to you?'

" 'Anything he asks,' replied Azamat.

" 'In that case I'll get the horse for you, but on one condition.... Swear you will carry it out?'

" 'I swear.... And you must swear too!'

" 'Good! I swear you'll get the horse, only you have to give me your sister Bela in exchange. Karagöz shall be her *kalym**! I hope the bargain suits you.'

"Azamat was silent.

" 'You don't want to? As you wish. I thought you were a man, but I see you're still a child: you're too young to ride in the saddle.'

"Azamat flared up. 'What about my father?' he asked.

" 'Doesn't he ever go anywhere?'

* Property given under tribal customs by a man for his bride.

" 'That's true, he does. . . .'

" 'So you agree?'

" 'I agree,' whispered Azamat, pale as death itself. 'When?'

" 'The next time Kazbich comes here; he has promised to bring a dozen sheep. The rest is my business. And you take care of your end of the bargain, Azamat!'

"So they arranged the whole business, and I must say it was a bad business indeed. Later I said so to Pechorin, but he only replied that the primitive Cherkess girl ought to be happy to have such a fine husband as himself, for, after all, he would be her husband according to the local custom, and that Kazbich was a brigand who should be punished anyway. Judge for yourself, what could I say against this? But at the time I knew nothing about the conspiracy. So one day Kazbich came asking whether we wanted sheep and honey, and I told him to bring some the day after. 'Azamat,' Grigori Alexandrovich said to the lad, 'tomorrow Karagöz will be in my hands. If Bela is not here tonight you will not see the horse. . . .'

" 'Good!' said Azamat and galloped back to his village. In the evening Grigori Alexandrovich armed himself and rode out of the fort. How they managed everything, I don't know—but at night they both returned and the sentry saw a woman lying across Azamat's saddle with hands and feet tied and head wrapped in a veil."

"And the horse?" I asked the captain.

"Just a moment, just a moment. Early the next morning Kazbich came, driving along the dozen sheep he wanted to sell. Tying his horse to a fence, he came to see me and I regaled him with tea, for, scoundrel though he was, he nevertheless was a *kunak* of mine.

"We began to chat about this and that. Suddenly I saw Kazbich start; his face twisted and he dashed for the window, but it unfortunately opened to the backyard. 'What's happened?' I asked.

" 'My horse . . . horse!' he said, shaking all over.

"And true enough, I heard the beat of hoofs. 'Some Cossack must have arrived.'

"'No! *Urus yaman, yaman,*'* he cried and dashed out like a wild panther. In two strides he was in the courtyard; at the gates of the fort a sentry barred his way with a musket, but he leaped over the weapon and began running down the road. In the distance a cloud of dust whirled—it was Azamat urging on the spirited Karagöz. Kazbich drew his gun from its holster and fired as he ran. For a minute he stood motionless until he was certain he had missed; then he screamed, dashed the gun to pieces against the stones, and rolled on the ground crying like a baby. . . . People from the fort gathered around him—but he did not see anyone, and after standing about for a while they all went back. I had the money for the sheep placed next to him, but he did not touch it; he only lay there face down like a corpse. Would you believe it, he lay like that all through the night? Only the next morning he returned to the fort to ask whether anyone could tell him who the thief was. A sentry who had seen Azamat untie the horse and gallop off did not think it necessary to conceal the fact. When Kazbich heard the name his eyes flashed and he set out for the village where Azamat's father lived."

"What did the father do?"

"The whole trouble was that Kazbich did not find him; he had gone off somewhere for six days or so. Had he not done so could Azamat have carried off his sister?

"The father returned to find both daughter and son gone. The lad was a wily one; he knew very well that his head wouldn't be worth anything if he got caught. So he has been missing ever since; most likely he joined some *abrek* band and perhaps ended his mad career beyond the Terek, or maybe the Kuban. And that's no more than he deserved!

"I must admit that it wasn't easy for me either. As soon as I learned that the Cherkess girl was at Grigori Alexandrovich's, I put on my epaulettes and strapped on my sword and went to see him.

"He was lying on the bed in the first room, one hand under his head and the other holding a pipe that had gone out. The door leading to the

* "Russian bad, bad!"

next room was locked, and there was no key in the lock; all this I noticed at once. I coughed and stamped my heels on the threshold, but he pretended not to hear.

" 'Ensign! Sir!' I said as severely as I could. 'Don't you realize that I've come to see you?'

" 'Ah, how do you do, Maxim Maximych. Have a pipe,' he replied without getting up.

" 'I beg your pardon! I am no Maxim Maximych: I am a captain to you!'

" 'Oh, it's all the same. Would you care to have some tea? If you only knew what a load I've got on my mind!'

" 'I know everything,' I replied, walking up to the bed.

" 'That's all the better, then. I am in no mood to go over it again.'

" 'Ensign, you have committed an offence for which I too may have to answer. . . .'

" 'Well, why not? Have we not always shared everything equally?'

" 'This is no time to joke. Will you surrender your sword?'

" 'Mitka, the sword!'

"Mitka brought the sword. Having thus done my duty, I sat down on the bed and said: 'Listen here, Grigori Alexandrovich, you'd best admit that it's wrong.'

" 'What's wrong?'

" 'To have kidnapped Bela. What a scoundrel that Azamat is! Come, now, admit it,' I said to him.

" 'Why should I? She happens to please me.'

"What would you have me reply to that? I did not know what to do. Nevertheless after a moment's silence I told him he would have to give the girl back if her father insisted.

" 'I don't see why I should!'

" 'But what if he finds out that she is here?'

" 'How will he?'

"Again I was in a blind alley.

" 'Listen, Maxim Maximych,' said Pechorin, rising, 'you're a good soul—if we give the girl to that barbarian he'll either kill her or sell her. What has been done cannot be undone, and it won't do to spoil things by being overzealous. You keep my sword, but leave her with me. . . .'

" 'Supposing you let me see her,' said I.

" 'She's behind that door; I myself have been trying in vain to see her. She sits there in a corner all huddled up in her shawl and will neither speak nor look at you; she's as timid as a gazelle. I hired the *dukhan* keeper's wife who speaks Tatar to look after her and get her accustomed to the idea that she is mine—for she will never belong to anyone but myself,' he added, striking the table with his fist.

"I reconciled myself to this too. . . . What would you have had me do? There are people who always get their own way."

"What happened in the end?" I asked Maxim Maximych. "Did he actually win her over or did she pine away in captivity longing for her native village?"

"Now why should she have longed for her native village? She could see the very same mountains from the fort as she had seen from the village, and that's all these barbarians want. Moreover, Grigori Alexandrovich gave her some present every day. At first she proudly tossed the gifts aside without a word, whereupon they became the property of the *dukhan* keeper's wife and stimulated her eloquence. Ah, gifts! What wouldn't a woman do for a bit of coloured rag! But I digress. . . . Grigori Alexandrovich strove long and hard to win her; in the meantime he learned to speak Tatar and she began to understand our language. Little by little she learned to look at him, at first askance, but she was always melancholy and I too could not help feeling sad when I heard her from the next room singing her native songs in a low voice. I shall never forget a scene I once witnessed while passing the window: Bela was seated on a bench, her head bowed, and Grigori Alexandrovich stood before her. 'Listen, my peri,' he was saying, 'don't you realize that sooner or later you must be mine—why then do you torment me so? Or perhaps you love some Chechen? If you do, I will let you go

home at once.' She shuddered barely perceptibly and shook her head. 'Or,' he went on, 'am I altogether hateful to you?' She sighed. 'Perhaps your faith forbids your loving me?' She grew pale but did not say a word. 'Believe me, there is only one Allah for all people, and if he permits me to love you, why should he forbid you to return my love?' She looked him straight in the face as if struck by this new thought; her eyes betrayed suspicion and sought reassurance. And what eyes she had! They shone like two coals.

"'Listen to me, sweet, kind Bela!' Pechorin continued. 'You can see how I love you. I am ready to do anything to cheer you; I want you to be happy, and if you keep on grieving I shall die. Tell me, you will be more cheerful?' She thought for a moment, her black eyes searching his face, then smiled tenderly and nodded in agreement. He took her hand and began to persuade her to kiss him; but she resisted weakly and repeated over and over again: 'Please, please, no, no.' He became persistent; she trembled and began to sob. 'I am your captive, your slave,' she said, 'and of course you can force me.' And again there were tears.

"Grigori Alexandrovich struck his forehead with his fist and ran into the next room. I went in to him; he was gloomily pacing up and down with arms folded. 'What now, old chap?' I asked him. 'She's not a woman, but a she-devil!' he replied. 'But I give you my word that she will be mine!' I shook my head. 'Do you want to wager?' he said. 'I'll give her a week.' 'Done!' We shook on it and parted.

"The next day he sent a messenger to Kizlyar to make diverse purchases and there was no end to the array of various kinds of Persian cloth that was brought back.

"'What do you think, Maxim Maximych,' he said as he showed me the gifts, 'will an Asiatic beauty be able to resist a battery like this?' 'You don't know Cherkess women,' I replied. 'They're nothing like Georgian or Transcaucasian Tatar women—nothing like them. They have their own rules of conduct; different upbringing, you know.' Grigori Alexandrovich smiled and began whistling a march air.

"It turned out that I was right: the gifts did only half the trick; she became more amiable and confiding—but nothing more. So he decided to play his last card. One morning he ordered his horse saddled, dressed in Cherkess fashion, armed himself, and went in to her. 'Bela,' he said, 'you know how I love you. I decided to carry you off, believing that when you came to know me you would love me too. But I made a mistake ; so, farewell, I leave you the mistress of everything I have, and if you wish, you can return to your father—you are free, I have wronged you and must be punished. Farewell, I shall ride away, where, I don't know. Perhaps it will not be long before I am cut down by a bullet or a sabre blow; when that happens, remember me and try to forgive me.' He turned away and extended his hand to her in parting. She did not take the hand, nor did she say a word. Standing behind the door I saw her through the crack, and I was sorry for her—such a deathly pallor had spread over her pretty little face. Hearing no reply, Pechorin took several steps towards the door. He was trembling, and do you know, I quite believe he was capable of actually doing what he threatened. The Lord knows that's the kind of man he was. But barely had he touched the door when she sprang up, sobbing and threw her arms around his neck. Believe me, I also wept standing there behind the door, that is, I didn't exactly weep, but—well, anyway it was silly."

The captain fell silent.

"I might as well confess," he said after a while, tugging at his moustache, "I was annoyed because no woman had ever loved me like that."

"How long did their happiness last?" I asked.

"Well, she admitted that Pechorin had often appeared in her dreams since the day she first saw him and that no other man had ever made such an impression on her. Yes, they were happy!"

"How boring!" I exclaimed involuntarily. Indeed, I was expecting a tragic end and it was a shock to see my hopes collapse so suddenly. "Don't tell me the father did not guess she was with you in the fort."

"I believe he did suspect. A few days later, however, we heard that the old man had been killed. This is how it happened. . . ."

My interest was again aroused.

"I must tell you that Kazbich got the idea that Azamat had stolen the horse with his father's consent, at least I think so. So he lay in ambush one day some three versts beyond the village when the old man was returning from his futile search for his daughter. The old man had left his liegemen lagging behind and was plunged deep in thought as he rode slowly down the road through the deepening twilight, when Kazbich suddenly sprang catlike from behind a bush, leapt behind him on the horse, cut him down with a blow of his dagger and seized the reins. Some of the liegemen saw it all from a hill, but though they set out in pursuit they could not overtake Kazbich."

"So he compensated himself for the loss of his horse and took revenge as well," I said in order to draw an opinion out of my companion.

"Of course, he was absolutely right according to their lights," said the captain.

I was struck by the ability of the Russian to reconcile himself to the customs of the people among whom he happens to live. I do not know whether this mental quality is a virtue or a vice, but it does reveal a remarkable flexibility and that sober common sense which forgives evil wherever it feels it to be necessary, or impossible to eradicate.

Meanwhile we had finished our tea. Outside the horses had been harnessed long since and were now standing shivering in the snow; the paling moon in the western sky was about to immerse itself in the black clouds that trailed like tattered bits of a rent curtain from the mountain peaks in the distance. We stepped out into the open. Contrary to the prediction of my companion, the weather had cleared and promised a calm morning. The stars, intertwined in garlands of a fantastic pattern in the far heavens, went out one after another as the pale glimmer of the east spread out over the dark lilac sky, gradually casting its glow on the steep mountainsides blanketed by virginal snow. To right and left yawned gloomy,

mysterious abysses, and the mist, coiling and twisting like a snake, crawled into them along the cracks and crevices of the cliffs as if in apprehension of coming day.

There was a great peace in the heavens and on earth as there is in the hearts of men at morning prayers. Only now and then the cold east wind came in gusts ruffling the hoary manes of the horses. We set out, the five lean nags hauling our carriages with difficulty along the tortuous road up Mount Goud. We walked behind, setting stones under the wheels when the horses could pull no longer; it seemed as if the road must lead straight to heaven, for it rose higher and higher as far as the eye could see and finally was lost in the cloud that had been reposing on the mountain summit since the day before like a vulture awaiting its prey. The snow crunched underfoot; the air grew so rare that it was painful to breathe; I continually felt the blood rushing to my head, yet a feeling of elation coursed through my being and somehow it felt good to be so much above the world—a childish feeling, I admit, but as we drift farther away from the conventions of society and draw closer to nature we willy-nilly become children again: the soul is unburdened of whatever it has acquired and it becomes what it once was and what it will surely be again. Anyone who has had occasion as I have to roam in the deserted mountains, feasting his eyes upon their fantastic shapes and eagerly inhaling the invigorating air of the gorges, will understand my urge to describe, to portray, to paint these magic canvases. At last we reached the summit of Mount Goud, and paused to look around us: a grey cloud rested on the mountain top and its cold breath held the threat of an imminent blizzard; but the east was so clear and golden that we, that is, the captain and I, promptly forgot about it. . . . Yes, the captain too: for simple hearts feel the beauty and majesty of nature a hundred times more keenly than do we, rapturous tellers of stories spoken or written.

"You are no doubt accustomed to these magnificent scenes," I said to him.

"Yes, sir, you can get accustomed even to the whining of bullets, I mean, accustomed to concealing the involuntary quickening of your pulse."

"On the contrary, I have been told that to some old soldiers it is sweet music."

"Yes, it is sweet too, if you please; but only because it makes the heart beat faster. Look," he added, pointing to the east, "what heavenly country!"

Indeed, it was a panorama I can hardly hope to see again: below us lay Koishaur Valley, the Aragva and another river, tracing their course across it like two silver threads; a bluish mist crept over it, seeking refuge in the nearest nooks from the warm rays of the morning; to the right and to the left the mountain ridges, one higher than the other, criss-crossed and stretched out into the distance, covered with snow and brush. Mountains as far as the eye could see, but no two crags alike—and all this snow burned with a rosy glitter so gay and so vivid that one would fain have stayed there for ever. The sun barely showed from behind a dark-blue mountain which only the experienced eye could distinguish from a storm-cloud, but above it stretched a crimson belt to which my comrade now drew my attention. "I told you," he exclaimed, "there's bad weather ahead; we'll have to hurry or it may catch us on Krestovaya. Look lively, there!" he shouted to the coachmen.

Chains were passed through the wheels for brakes to prevent them from getting out of control. Leading the horses by their bridles we began the descent. To the right of us was a cliff, and to the left an abyss so deep that an Ossetian village at the bottom looked like a swallow's nest; I shuddered at the thought that dozen times a year some courier rides through the dark night along this road too narrow for two carts to pass, without alighting from his jolting carriage. One of our drivers was a Russian peasant from Yaroslavl, the other an Ossetian. The Ossetian took the leading horse by the bridle after unhitching the first pair in good time and taking every other possible precaution, but our heedless Russian did not even bother to get down from the box. When I suggested that he might have shown some concern if only for my portmanteau, which I had no desire to go down into the abyss to recover, he replied: "Don't worry, sir! With God's help we'll get there

just as well as they. This is not the first time we've done it." And he was right; true, we might not have got through safely, yet we did. And if all men gave the matter more thought they would realize that life is not worth worrying over too much....

Perhaps you wish to hear the story of Bela to he end? Firstly, however, I am not writing a novel but simply travel notes, and hence I cannot make the captain resume his story sooner than he actually did. So you will have to wait, or, if you wish to do so, skip a few pages; only I do not advise you to, for the crossing of Mount Krestovaya (or le Mont St. Christophe as the learned Gamba calls it) is worthy of your interest. And so we descended from Mount Goud to Chertova Valley. That is a romantic name for you. Perhaps you already visualize the den of the Evil Spirit among the inaccessible crags—but if you do, you are mistaken: Chertova Valley derives its name from the word "*cherta*" and not "*chort*," for the boundary of Georgia once passed here.* The valley was buried under snow-drifts which gave the scene a rather strong resemblance to Saratov, Tambov and other spots *dear to us* in our mother country.

"There's Krestovaya," said the captain as we came down to Chertova Valley, pointing to a hill shrouded by snow. On the summit the black outline of a stone cross was visible, and past it ran a barely discernible road which was used only when the road along the mountainside was snow-bound. Our drivers said that there were no snow-slips yet and in order to spare the horses they took us the roundabout way. Around a turn in the road we came upon five Ossetians who offered us their services, and seizing hold of the wheels and shouting, they began to help our carriage along. The road was dangerous indeed. To our right, masses of snow hung overhead ready, it seemed, to crash down into the gorge with the first blast of wind. Some sections of the narrow road were covered with snow, which here and there gave way underfoot; others had been turned to ice under the action of the sun's rays and

* A play of words in the original Russian. "*Cherta*" means "line" and "*chort*," "devil."

night frosts, so that we made headway with difficulty. The horses kept on slipping, and to the left of us yawned a deep fissure with a turbulent stream at the bottom that now slipped out of sight under a crust of ice, now plunged in frothy fury amidst black boulders. It took us all of two hours to skirt Mount Krestovaya—two hours to negotiate two versts. In the meantime the clouds came lower and it began to hail and snow. The wind bursting into the gorges howled and whistled like Solovey the Brigand,* and soon the stone cross was blotted out by the mist which was coming in waves from the east, each wave thicker than the other. Incidentally, there is a queer but generally accepted legend about this cross which claims it was raised by Emperor Peter I when he travelled through the Caucasus. Yet, in the first place, Peter was only in Daghestan, and, secondly, an inscription in big letters on the cross announced it had been put up on the orders of General Yermolov, in 1824, to be exact. Despite the inscription, the legend had taken such firm root that one is at a loss to know what to believe, all the more so since we are not accustomed to put our faith in inscriptions.

We had another five versts to descend along the ice-coated rocky ledges and through soft snow before reaching the station at Kobi. The horses were exhausted and we thoroughly chilled, while the blizzard blew harder and harder, much like our native, northern snow-storms, except that its wild refrain was sadder and more mournful. "You too, my exile," thought I, "are mourning your wide, boundless steppes where there was space to spread out your icy wings, whilst here you are choked and hemmed in like the eagle who beats against the bars of his iron cage."

"Looks bad!" the captain was saying. "Nothing but mist and snow. Watch out or we'll find ourselves dropping into a crevice or getting stuck in some wretched hole, and the Baidara down there will probably be running too high to cross. That's Asia for you! The rivers are as unreliable as the people."

* Russian legendary hero, one whistle from whom was enough to knock a man down.

The drivers shouted and cursed as they whipped the snorting, balking horses which refused to take another step in spite of the persuasion of the whip. "Your Honour," one of the drivers finally said, "we can't reach Kobi today. Had we not better turn to the left while there is still time? Over on that slope there are some huts, I believe. Travellers always halt there in bad weather." Then he added, pointing to an Ossetian: "They say they will guide us there if you give them some money for vodka."

"I know it, brother, I know without you telling me!" said the captain. "These rogues! They'll do anything for a tip."

"All the same you have to admit that we'd be worse off without them," said I.

"Maybe, maybe," he muttered, "but I know these guides! They can tell by instinct when to take advantage of you; as if you couldn't find your way without them."

So we turned to the left and somehow after a good deal of trouble made our way to the scanty refuge consisting of two huts built of slabs and stones and surrounded by a wall of the same material. The tattered inhabitants gave us a cordial welcome. Later I found out that the government pays and feeds them on condition that they take in wayfarers who are caught by the storm.

"It's all for the best," said I, taking a seat by the fire. "Now you will be able to tell me the rest of the story about Bela; I am sure that wasn't the end of it."

"What makes you so sure?" replied the captain, with a sly smile and a twinkle in his eye.

"Because things don't happen like that. Anything that begins so strangely must end in the same way."

"Well, you guessed right. . . ."

"Glad to hear it."

"It's all very well for you to be glad, but for me it is really sad to recall. She was a fine girl, Bela was! I grew as fond of her in the end as if she were my own daughter, and she loved me too. I ought to tell you that

I have no family; I haven't heard about my father or mother for some twelve years now, and it didn't occur to me to get myself a wife earlier—and now, you must admit, it would no longer be seemly. So I was happy to have found someone to pet. She would sing to us or dance the Lezghinka.... And how she danced! I've seen our provincial fine ladies and once some twenty years ago I was at the Nobles' Club in Moscow, but none of them could hold a candle to her. Grigori Alexandrovich dressed her up like a doll, petted and fondled her, and she grew so lovely that it was amazing. The tan disappeared from her face and arms and her cheeks grew rosy.... How gay she was and how she used to tease me, the little vixen.... May God forgive her!"

"What happened when you told her about her father's death?"

"We kept it from her for a long time, until she became accustomed to her new position. And when she was told, she cried for a couple of days and then forgot about it.

"For about four months everything went splendidly. Grigori Alexandrovich, I must have already told you, had a passion for hunting. Some irresistible force used to draw him to the forest to stalk wild boar or goats, and now he had scarcely ventured beyond the ramparts. Then I noticed he was growing pensive again; he would pace up and down the room with his arms folded behind his back. One day without saying a word to anyone he took his gun and went out, and was lost for the whole morning; that happened once, twice, and then more and more frequently. Things are going badly, I thought, something must have come between them!

"One morning when I dropped in to see them I found Bela sitting on the bed wearing a black silk *beshmet,* so pale and sad that I was really alarmed.

" 'Where's Pechorin?' I asked.

" 'Hunting.'

" 'When did he leave? Today?'

"She did not reply, it seemed difficult for her to speak.

" 'No, yesterday,' she finally said with a deep sigh.

" 'I hope nothing has happened to him.'

" 'All day yesterday I thought and thought,' she said, her eyes full of tears, 'and imagined all kinds of terrible things. First I thought a wild boar had injured him, then that the Chechen had carried him off to the mountains.... And now it already seems to me that he doesn't love me.'

" 'Truly, my dear, you couldn't have imagined anything worse!'

"She burst into tears, and then proudly raised her head, dried her eyes, and continued:

" 'If he doesn't love me, what prevents him from sending me home? I am not forcing myself on him. And if this goes on I shall leave myself; I am not his slave, I am a prince's daughter!'

"I began reasoning with her. 'Listen, Bela, he can't sit here all the time as if tied to your apron strings. He's a young man and likes to hunt. He'll go and he'll come back, and if you are going to mope he'll only get tired of you the sooner.'

" 'You are right,' she replied. 'I shall be gay.' Laughing, she seized her tambourine and began to sing and dance for me. But very soon she threw herself on the bed again and hid her face in her hands.

"What was I to do with her? You see, I had never had dealings with women. I racked my brains for some way to comfort her but could not think of anything. For a time we both were silent. A most unpleasant situation, I assure you!

"At length I said: 'Would you like to go for a walk with me on the rampart? The weather's fine.' It was September, and the day was really wonderful, sunny but not too hot, the mountains as clearly visible as if laid out on a platter. We went out, and in silence walked up and down the breastwork. After a while she sat down on the turf, and I sat next to her. It's really funny to recall how I fussed over her like a nursemaid.

"Our fort was situated on an elevation, and the view from the parapet was excellent: on one side was a wide open space intersected by gullies and

ending in a forest that stretched all the way to the top of the mountain ridge, and here and there on this expanse you could see the smoke of villages and droves of grazing horses; on the other side flowed a small rivulet bordered by dense brush that covered the flinty hills merging with the main chain of the Caucasus. We were sitting in a corner of a bastion whence we had a perfect view of either side. As I scanned the landscape, a man riding a grey horse emerged from the woods and came closer and closer, until he finally stopped on the far side of the rivulet some hundred sagenes or so from where we were and began spinning around on his horse like mad. What the devil was that?

" 'You've younger eyes than I, Bela, see if you can make out that horseman,' said I. 'I wonder whom he is honouring with a visit.'

"She looked and cried out: 'It's Kazbich!'

" 'Ah, the brigand! Has he come to mock at us?' Now I could see it was Kazbich: the same swarthy features, and as tattered and dirty as ever. 'That's my father's horse,' Bela said, seizing my arm; she trembled like a leaf and her eyes flashed. 'Aha, my little one,' thought I, 'brigand blood tells in you too.'

" 'Come here,' I called to a sentry, 'take aim and knock that fellow off for me and you'll get a ruble in silver.' 'Yes, Your Honour, only he doesn't stay still. . . .' 'Tell him to,' said I laughing. 'Hey, there!' shouted the sentry waving his arm, 'wait a minute, will you, stop spinning like a top!' Kazbich actually paused to listen, probably thinking we wanted to parley, the insolent beggar! My grenadier took aim . . . bang! . . and missed, for as soon as the powder flashed in the pan, Kazbich gave a jab to the horse making it leap aside. He stood up in his stirrups, shouted something in his own language, shook his whip menacingly in the air—and in a flash was gone.

" 'You ought to be ashamed of yourself!' I said to the sentry.

" 'Your Honour! He's gone off to die,' he replied. 'Such a cussed lot they are you can't kill them with one shot.'

"A quarter of an hour later Pechorin returned from the chase. Bela ran to meet him and threw her arms around his neck, and not a single complaint, not a single reproach for his long absence did I hear.... Even I had lost patience with him. 'Sir,' said I, 'Kazbich was on the other side of the river just now and we fired at him; you could easily have run into him too. These mountaineers are vengeful people, and do you think he does not suspect you helped Azamat? I'll wager he saw Bela here. And I happen to know that a year ago he was very much attracted by her—told me so himself in fact. Had he had any hope of raising a substantial *kalym* he surely would have asked for her in marriage....' Pechorin was grave now. 'Yes,' he said, 'we have to be more careful.... Bela, after today you must not go out on the rampart any more.'

"That evening I had a long talk with him; it grieved me that he had changed toward the poor girl, for besides being out hunting half the time, he began to treat her coldly, rarely showing her any affection. She began to waste away visibly, her face grew drawn, and her big eyes lost their lustre. Whenever I asked her, 'Why are you sighing, Bela? Are you sad?' she would reply, 'No.' 'Do you want anything?' 'No!' 'Are you grieving for your kinsfolk?' 'I have no kinsfolk.' For days on end you couldn't get more than 'yes' or 'no' out of her.

"I resolved to have a talk with him about this. 'Listen, Maxim Maximych,' he replied, 'I have an unfortunate character; whether it is my upbringing that made me like that or God who created me so, I do not know. I know only that if I cause unhappiness to others I myself am no less unhappy. I realize this is poor consolation for them—but the fact remains that it is so. In my early youth after leaving the guardianship of my parents, I plunged into all the pleasures money could buy, and naturally these pleasures grew distasteful to me. Then I went into society, but soon enough grew tired of it; I fell in love with beautiful society women and was loved by them, but their love only spurred on my ambition and vanity while my heart remained desolate.... I began to read and to study, but wearied of learning too; I saw that neither fame nor happiness depended on it in the slightest,

for the happiest people were the ignorant and fame was a matter of luck, to achieve which you only had to be shrewd. And I grew bored.... Soon I was transferred to the Caucasus; this was the happiest time of my life. I hoped that boredom would not survive under Chechen bullets—but in vain; in a month I had become so accustomed to their whine and the proximity of death that, to tell the truth, the mosquitoes bothered me more, and life became more boring than ever because I had now lost practically my last hope. When I saw Bela at my home, when I held her on my lap and first kissed her raven locks, I foolishly thought she was an angel sent down to me by a compassionate Providence.... Again I erred: the love of a barbarian girl is little better than that of a well-born lady; the ignorance and simplicity of the one are as boring as the coquetry of the other. I still love her, if you wish, I am grateful to her for a few rather blissful moments, I am ready to give my life for her, but I am bored with her. I don't know whether I am a fool or a scoundrel; but the fact is that I am to be pitied as much, if not more than she. My soul has been warped by the world, my mind is restless, my heart insatiable; nothing suffices me: I grow accustomed to sorrow as readily as to joy, and my life becomes emptier from day to day. Only one expedient is left for me, and that is to travel. As soon as possible I shall set out—not for Europe, God forbid—but for America, Arabia, India—and perhaps I shall die somewhere on the road! At least I am sure that with the help of storms and bad roads this last resort will not soon cease to be a consolation.' He talked long in this vein and his words seared themselves in my memory for it was the first time I had heard such talk from a man of twenty-five, and, I hope to God, the last. Amazing! You probably were in the capital recently; perhaps you can tell me," the captain went on, addressing me, "whether the young people there are all like that?"

I replied that there are many who say the same, and that most likely some of them are speaking the truth; that, on the whole, disillusionment, having begun like all vogues in the upper strata of society, had descended to the lower which wear it threadbare, and that now those who are really bored

the most endeavour to conceal that misfortune as if it were a vice. The captain did not understand these subtleties, and he shook his head and smiled slyly:

"It was the French, I suppose, who made boredom fashionable?"

"No, the English."

"Ah, so that's it!" he replied. "Of course, they've always been inveterate drunkards!"

Involuntarily I recalled one Moscow lady who claimed Byron was nothing more than a drunkard. The captain's remark, however, was more excusable, for in order to abstain from drink he naturally tried to reassure himself that all misfortunes in the world are caused by intemperance.

"Kazbich did not come again," he went on with his story. "Still, for some unknown reason, I could not get rid of the idea that his visit had not been purposeless and that he was scheming something evil.

"Once Pechorin persuaded me to go hunting wild boar with him. I tried to resist, for what was a wild boar to me, but finally he did make me go with him. We set out early in the morning, taking five soldiers with us. Until ten o'clock we poked about the reeds and the woods without seeing a single animal. 'What do you say to turning back?' said I. 'What's the use of being stubborn? You can see for yourself the day has turned out to be unlucky.' But Grigori Alexandrovich did not want to return empty-handed in spite of the heat and fatigue.... That's how he was; if he set his mind on something he had to get it; his mother must have spoiled him as a child.... At last around noon we came upon a cussed boar!.. bang!.. bang!.. but no: the beast slipped into the reeds ... yes, it was indeed our unlucky day. After a bit of a rest we turned for home.

"We rode side by side, in silence, reins hanging loose, and had almost reached the fort, though we could not yet see it for the brush, when a shot rang out. We looked at each other, and the same suspicion flashed through our minds. Galloping in the direction of the sound, we saw a group of soldiers huddled together on the rampart, pointing to the field where a horseman was careering into the distance at breakneck speed with something white

across his saddle, Grigori Alexandrovich yelled not a whit worse than any Chechen, drew his gun from its holster and dashed in pursuit, and I after him.

"Luckily, because of our poor hunting luck, our horses were quite fresh; they strained under the saddle, and with every moment we gained on our quarry. Finally I recognized Kazbich, though I could not make out what he was holding in front of him. I drew abreast of Pechorin and shouted to him: 'It's Kazbich!' He looked at me, nodded and struck his horse with the crop.

"At last we were within gunshot of Kazbich. Whether his horse was exhausted or whether it was worse than ours I do not know, but he was unable to get much speed out of the animal in spite of his efforts to urge it on. I am sure he was thinking of his Karagöz then. . . .

"I looked up and saw Pechorin aiming. 'Don't shoot!' I yelled. 'Save the charge, we'll catch up with him soon enough.' That's youth for you: always foolhardy at the wrong time. . . . But the shot rang out and the bullet wounded the horse in a hind leg; the animal made another dozen leaps before it stumbled and fell on its knees. Kazbich sprang from the saddle, and now we saw he was holding a woman bound in a veil in his arms. It was Bela . . . poor Bela! He shouted something to us in his own language and raised his dagger over her. . . . There was no time to waste and I fired at random. I must have hit him in the shoulder, for his arm suddenly dropped. When the smoke dispersed there was the wounded horse lying on the ground and Bela next to it, while Kazbich, who had thrown away his gun, was scrambling up a cliff through the underbrush like a cat. I wanted to pick him off but my gun was unloaded now. We slipped out of the saddle and ran toward Bela. The poor girl lay motionless, blood streaming from her wound. The villain! Had he struck her in the heart, it all would have been over in a moment, but to stab her in the back in the foulest way! She was unconscious. We tore the veil into strips and bandaged the wound as tightly as we could. In vain Pechorin kissed her cold lips; nothing could bring her back to consciousness.

"Pechorin mounted his horse and I raised her up from the ground, somehow managing to place her in front of him in the saddle. He put his arm around her and we started back. After several minutes of silence, Grigori Alexandrovich spoke: 'Listen, Maxim Maximych, we'll never get her home alive at this pace.' 'You're right,' I said, and we spurred the horses to full gallop. At the fort gates a crowd was awaiting us. We carried the wounded girl gently into Pechorin's quarters and sent for the surgeon. Although he was drunk, he came at our summons, and after examining the wound said the girl could not live more than a day. But he was wrong... ."

"She recovered then?" I asked the captain seizing his arm, glad in spite of myself.

"No," he replied, "the surgeon was wrong only in that she lived another two days."

"But tell me how did Kazbich manage to kidnap her?"

"It was like this: disobeying Pechorin's instructions, she had left the fort and gone to the river. It was very hot, and she had sat down on a rock and dipped her feet into the water. Kazbich crept up, seized and gagged her, dragged her into the bushes, jumped on his horse and galloped off. She managed to scream, however, and the sentries gave the alarm, fired after him but missed, and that's when we arrived on the scene."

"Why did Kazbich want to carry her off?"

"My dear sir! These Cherkess are a nation of thieves. Their fingers itch for anything that lies unguarded; whether they need it or not, they steal—they just can't help themselves! Besides he had long had his eye on Bela."

"And she died?"

"Yes, but she suffered a great deal, and we too were worn out watching her. About ten o'clock at night she regained consciousness; we were sitting at her bedside. As soon as she opened her eyes she asked for Pechorin. 'I am here, beside you, my *janechka*,' (that is, 'darling' in our lan-

guage) he replied taking her hand. 'I shall die,' she said. We began to reassure her, saying that the surgeon had promised to cure her without fail, but she shook her head and turned to the wall. She did not want to die!

"During the night she grew delirious. Her head was on fire and every now and then she shook with fever. She was now talking incoherently about her father and brother; she wanted to go back to her mountains and home.... Then she also talked about Pechorin, calling him all kinds of tender names or reproaching him for not loving his *janechka* any more....

"He listened in silence, his head resting on his hands. But throughout it all I did not notice a single tear on his lashes; whether he was actually incapable of weeping or whether he held himself in check, I do not know. As for myself, I had never witnessed anything more heart-rending.

"By morning the delirium passed. For about an hour she lay motionless, pale and so weak that her breathing was barely perceptible. Presently she felt better and began to speak again, but can you guess of what? Such thoughts can occur only to the dying. She regretted that she was not a Christian and that in the world beyond her soul would never meet Grigori Alexandrovich's, that some other woman would be his soulmate in paradise. It occurred to me that she might be baptized before death, but when I suggested this she gazed at me in indecision for a long time, unable to say a word. At last she replied that she would die in the faith she had been born. So the whole day passed. How she changed in that day! Her pallid cheeks grew sunken, her eyes seemed to become larger and larger, and her lips were burning. The fever within her was like red-hot iron.

"The second night came, and we sat at her bedside without closing an eyelid. She was in terrible agony, she moaned, but as soon as the pain subsided a little she tried to assure Grigori Alexandrovich that she was feeling better, urged him to get some sleep, and kissed his hand and clung to it

with her own. Just before daybreak the agony of death set in, and she tossed on the bed, tearing off the bandage so that the blood flowed again. When the wound was dressed she calmed down for a moment and asked Pechorin to kiss her. He knelt by the bed, raised her head from the pillow and pressed his lips against hers, which were now growing chill; she entwined her trembling arms tightly around his neck as if by this kiss she wished to give her soul to him. Yes, it was well that she died! What would have happened to her had Grigori Alexandrovich left her? And that was bound to happen sooner or later....

"The first half of the next day she was quiet, silent and submissive in spite of the way our surgeon tortured her with poultices and medicine. 'My good man!' I protested. 'You yourself said she would not live, why then all these medicines of yours?' 'Got to do it, just the same, Maxim Maximych,' he replied, 'so that my conscience should be at peace.' Conscience indeed!

"In the afternoon she was tortured by thirst. We opened the windows, but it was hotter outside than in the room. We placed ice next to her bed, but nothing helped. I knew that this unbearable thirst was a sign that the end was approaching, and I said so to Pechorin. 'Water, water,' she repeated hoarsely, raising herself from the bed.

"He went white as a sheet, seized a glass, filled it with water, and gave it to her. I covered my face with my hands and began to recite a prayer. I can't remember which. Yes, sir, I had been through a great deal in my time, had seen men die in hospitals and on the battlefield, but it had been nothing like this! I must confess that there was something else that made me sad; not once before her death did she remember me, and I think I loved her like a father. Well.... May God forgive her! But then who am I that anyone should remember me on his deathbed?

"As soon as she had drunk the water she felt better, and some three minutes later she passed away. We pressed a mirror to her lips, but nothing showed on it. I led Pechorin out of the room, and then we walked on the fort wall, pacing back and forth side by side for a long while without uttering

a word, arms crossed behind our backs. It angered me to detect no sign of emotion on his face, for in his place I should have died of grief. Finally, he sat down on the ground in the shade and began to trace some design in the sand with a stick. I began to speak, wishing to console him, more for the sake of good form than anything else, you know, whereupon he looked up and laughed.... That laugh sent cold shivers running up and down my spine.... I went to order the coffin.

"I confess that it was partly for diversion that I occupied myself with this business. I covered the coffin with a piece of tarlatan I had and ornamented it with some Cherkess silver lace Grigori Alexandrovich had bought for her.

"Early next morning we buried her beyond the fort, next to the spot on the riverbank where she had sat that last time; the small grave is now surrounded by white acacia and elder bushes. I wanted to put up a cross, but that was a bit awkward, you know, for after all she was not a Christian...."

"What did Pechorin do?" I asked.

"He was ailing for a long time and lost weight, the poor chap. But we never spoke about Bela after that. I saw it would be painful for him, so why should I have mentioned her? Some three months later he was ordered to join the ... regiment, and he went to Georgia. Since then we have not met. Oh yes, I remember someone telling me recently that he had returned to Russia, though it had not been mentioned in the corps orders. In general it takes a long time before news reaches us here."

Here, probably to dispel his sad memories, he launched upon a long dissertation concerning the disadvantages of hearing year-old tidings.

I neither interrupted him nor listened.

An hour later it was already possible to continue our journey. The blizzard had died down and the sky cleared up, and we set out. On the road, however, I could not help directing the conversation back to Bela and Pechorin.

"Did you ever happen to hear what became of Kazbich?" I asked.

"Kazbich? Really, I don't know. I have heard that the Shapsugi on the right flank of the line have a Kazbich, a bold fellow who wears a red *beshmet*, rides at a trot under our fire and bows with exaggerated politeness whenever a bullet whistles near him, but I doubt whether it's the same man."

Maxim Maximych and I parted at Kobi, for I took the post chaise and he could not keep pace with me because of his heavy baggage. At the time we did not think we would ever meet again, yet we did, and if you wish, I will tell you about it, but that is a story in itself.... You must admit, however, that Maxim Maximych is a man you can respect. If you do admit it, I shall be amply rewarded for my story, long though it may be.

II

MAXIM MAXIMYCH

AFTER PARTING with Maxim Maximych, I made good time through the Terek and Daryal gorges and had breakfast at Kazbek and tea at Lars, driving into Vladikavkaz by suppertime. I shall not bore you with descriptions of mountains, exclamations that mean nothing and landscapes that convey nothing, especially to those who have never been in these parts, or with statistical observations which I am certain no one will bother to read.

I stopped at a hotel where all travellers stay and where, incidentally, there is no one to serve you a roast pheasant or a plate of cabbage soup, for the three invalids in charge are either so stupid or so drunk that there is no sense to be had from them.

I was told that I should have to stop there for another three days, for the *okazia* from Yekaterinograd had not come in yet, and hence could not set out on the return trip. What an *okazia*! But a bad pun is no consolation to a Russian and in order to while away the time I decided to write down

Maxim Maximych's story about Bela quite unaware that it would turn out to be the first link in a long chain of tales. So you see how an occurrence insignificant in itself may have grave consequences.... But perhaps you do not know what an *okazia** is? It is an escort of half a company of infantry and a gun under whose protection the caravans cross Kabarda from Vladikavkaz to Yekaterinograd.

The first day was very dull, but early next morning a carriage drove into the yard. It was Maxim Maximych. We greeted each other like old friends. I offered him the use of my room. He did not stand on ceremony, he even clapped me on the shoulder, and his mouth twisted in what passed for a smile. A queer chap!

Maxim Maximych was well versed in the culinary art and turned out a wonderful roast pheasant with a highly successful pickled cucumber sauce. I must admit that without him I would have had to content myself with a cold snack. A bottle of Kakhetian helped us to overlook the modesty of the meal which consisted of only one course. Afterwards we lit our pipes and settled down for a smoke, I near the window and he next to the stove where a fire was going, for the day was chilly and raw. We sat in silence; what was there to say?... He had already told me all that was interesting about himself, and I had nothing to tell him. I looked out of the window. A multitude of low houses, sprawling along the shore of the Terek, which here spreads wider and wider, were visible through the trees, while in the distance was the blue serrated wall of the mountains with Kazbek in its white cardinal's hat peering over it. Mentally I bid them good-bye; I felt sorry to leave them.

We sat thus for a long time. The sun was setting behind the frigid peaks and a milky mist was spreading through the valleys when we heard the tinkling of bells and the shouting of drivers outside. Several carts with filthy Armenians on top drove into the courtyard followed by an empty carriage whose lightness, comfort and elegance gave it a distinctly foreign

* *Okazia* means also occasion, adventure; the idiomatic expression *chto za okazia*! (what an *okazia*) means "How unfortunate!"

air. Behind walked a man with a huge moustache wearing a dolman; he was rather well dressed for a manservant; but the way he knocked the ashes from his pipe and shouted at the coachman left no doubt as to his station. He was obviously the pampered servant of an indolent gentleman—something of a Russian Figaro. "Tell me, my good man," I called to him from the window, "is it the *okazia*?" He looked at me rather insolently, straightened his neckerchief and turned away. An Armenian who had been walking beside him smiled and replied for him that it was the *okazia* and that it would set out on the return trip the next morning. "Thank God!" said Maxim Maximych who had just walked to the window. "A fine carriage!" he added. "Probably some official on his way to conduct a hearing in Tiflis. You can see he doesn't know our hills. No, my dear fellow, they're not for the likes of you; even an English carriage wouldn't stand the jolting! I wonder who it is—let's find out. . . ." We went into the corridor, at the far end of which a door was open into a side room. The valet and the driver were carrying in portmanteaus.

"Listen, friend," the captain asked the valet, "whose is that fine carriage, eh? A splendid carriage indeed!" The valet muttered something inaudible without turning and went on unstrapping a case. This was too much for Maxim Maximych, who tapped the insolent fellow on the shoulder and said: "I am talking to you, my good man. . . ."

"Whose carriage? My master's."

"And who is your master?"

"Pechorin."

"What did you say? Pechorin? Good God! Did he ever serve in the Caucasus?" Maxim Maximych exclaimed, pulling at my sleeve. His eyes lit up with joy.

"I believe so . . . but I haven't been with him long."

"Well, well, there you are! Grigori Alexandrovich is his name, isn't it? Your master and I used to know each other well," he added, with a friendly slap on the valet's shoulder that nearly made him lose his balance.

"Excuse me, sir, you are in my way," said the latter, frowning.

"Don't be absurd, man! Don't you know I am an old friend of your master's, we lived together, too. Now where can I find him?"

The servant announced that Pechorin had stayed behind to dine and spend the night with Colonel N.

"Will he not be here tonight?" said Maxim Maximych. "Or perhaps you, my good man, will have some reason to see him? If you do, tell him Maxim Maximych is here; you just tell him that and he'll know.... I'll give you a *vosmigrivenny* for vodka...."

The valet put on a superior air on hearing this modest offer, but nevertheless promised Maxim Maximych to do as he asked.

"He'll come at once, I warrant!" Maxim Maximych told me triumphantly. "I'll go out to the gates to meet him. Pity I don't know N."

Maxim Maximych sat down on a bench outside the gate and I went into my room. I must admit that I too awaited the appearance of this Pechorin with some eagerness, for though the captain's story had not given me too favourable a portrait of the man, some of his traits nevertheless struck me as quite remarkable. In an hour one of the invalids brought in a steaming samovar and a teapot. "Maxim Maximych, will you have some tea?" I called to him from the window.

"Thank you, I really don't care for any."

"You'd better have some. It's late already and getting chilly."

"No, thank you...."

"Well, as you wish!" I said and sat down to tea alone. In ten minutes or so the old man came in. "I suppose you are right," he said. "Better have some tea.... You see, I was waiting. His man has been gone a long time; looks as if something has detained him."

He hastily gulped down a cup of tea, refused a second, and went back to the gate, obviously upset. It was clear that the old man was hurt by Pechorin's unconcern, all the more so since he had spoken to me so recently about their friendship and only an hour before had been certain that Pechorin would come running as soon as he heard his name.

It was dark when I again opened the window and called to remind Maxim Maximych that it was time to retire. He muttered something in reply and I urged him again to come in, but he did not answer.

Leaving a candle on the bench, I lay down on the couch, wrapped myself in my greatcoat and was soon asleep. I would have slept peacefully all night had not Maxim Maximych awakened me when he came in very late. He threw his pipe on the table, began pacing up and down the room, then tinkered with the stove. Finally he lay down, coughing, spitting and tossing about for a long time.

"Bedbugs bothering you?" I asked.

"Yes, bedbugs," he replied with a heavy sigh.

I woke up early next morning but Maxim Maximych had already risen. I found him sitting on the bench at the gate. "I've got to see the commandant," he said, "so if Pechorin comes will you please send for me?"

I promised to do so. He ran off as if his limbs had regained the strength and agility of youth.

It was a fresh, fine morning. Golden clouds piled up on the mountains like a new range of aerial summits. In front of the gates was a broad square, and beyond it the market-place was seething with people, for it was Sunday. Barefooted Ossetian boys, birchbark baskets laden with honeycombs strapped to their backs, crowded around me, but I drove them away for I was too preoccupied to give them much thought; the good captain's disquietude was beginning to claim me too.

Ten minutes had not passed when the man for whom we had been waiting appeared at the far end of the square. With him was Colonel N., who left him at the hotel and turned toward the fort. I immediately sent one of the invalids for Maxim Maximych.

Pechorin was met by his valet who reported that the horses would be ready in a moment, handed him a box of cigars and having received a few instructions, retired to carry them out. His master lit a cigar, yawned once or twice and sat down on a bench on the other side of the gate. Now I should like to draw you his portrait.

He was of medium stature; his erect, lithe figure and broad shoulders suggested a strong physique equal to all the hardships of the road and variations of climate, unweakened by either the dissolute life of the capital or emotional conflicts. His dusty velvet coat was open except for the last two buttons, revealing an expanse of dazzlingly white linen that betrayed the habits of a gentleman. His soiled gloves seemed to have been made for his small, aristocratic hands, and when he pulled off a glove, I was amazed at the slenderness of his white fingers. His walk was careless and indolent, but I noticed he did not swing his arms—a sure sign of a certain reticence of character. But these are my personal opinions based on my own observations, and I cannot compel you to accept them blindly. When he sank down on the bench his erect frame sagged as if his back was spineless; his whole posture now betrayed some nervous debility; he sat as a thirty-year-old Balzacian coquette might sit in a cushioned easy chair after an exhausting ball. At first glance I should not have given him more than twenty-three years, though later I was ready to grant him thirty. There was something childlike in his smile. His skin was as delicate as a woman's, and his naturally curly fair hair made a pleasing frame for his pale, noble brow on which only careful scrutiny could disclose a fine network of wrinkles that probably were a good deal more in evidence at times of anger or spiritual disquietude. In spite of his light hair, his moustache and eyebrows were black—as much a sign of pedigree in a man as a black mane and tail are in a white horse. To complete the portrait, I shall say that he had a slightly turned-up nose and that his teeth were dazzlingly white and his eyes hazel—but about his eyes I must say a few more words.

Firstly, they did not laugh when he did. Have you ever had occasion to observe this peculiarity in people? It is a sign either of evil nature or deep constant sadness. They shone with a phosphorescent glow, if one may so put it, under half-closed eyelids. It was no reflection of spiritual warmth or fertile imagination; it was the flash of smooth steel, blinding but cold. His glance was brief but piercing and oppressive, it had the disturbing effect of an indiscreet question, and might have seemed challenging had it not

been so calmly casual. Perhaps all these observations came to my mind only because I happened to know some details about his life, and another person might have obtained an entirely different impression, but since you will not learn about him from anyone else, you will have to be satisfied with this portrayal. I must say in conclusion that, on the whole, he was handsome indeed, and had one of those unusual faces that are particularly pleasing to ladies.

The horses were harnessed, the bell attached to the shaft bow tinkled, and the valet had already reported twice to Pechorin that the carriage was waiting, but still there was no sign of Maxim Maximych. Luckily Pechorin was deep in thought; he gazed at the blue jagged ridge of the Caucasus apparently in no hurry to be on his way. I crossed over to him. "If you would care to wait a while," said I, "you will have the pleasure of meeting an old friend. . . ."

"Ah, that's right!" he replied quickly. "I was told about him yesterday. But where is he?" I looked out over the square and saw Maxim Maximych running towards us for all he was worth. . . . In a few minutes he had reached us. He could barely catch his breath, beads of perspiration rolled down his face, damp strands of grey hair that had escaped from under his cap were plastered to his face, and his knees shook. He was about to throw his arms around Pechorin's neck, but the latter extended his hand coldly, though his smile was pleasant enough. For a moment the captain was dumbfounded, then eagerly gripped the hand with both of his. He was still unable to speak.

"This is a pleasure, dear Maxim Maximych. How are you?" said Pechorin.

"And you . . ." faltered the old man, tears welling up in his eyes. "It's a long time . . . a very long time. . . . But where are you off to?"

"On my way to Persia . . . and farther. . . ."

"Not immediately, I hope? Won't you stay a while? We haven't seen each other for so long."

"I must go, Maxim Maximych," was the reply.

"My God, what is the hurry? I have so much to tell you and so many questions to ask. . . . How are things, anyway? Retired, eh? What have you been doing?"

"Bored to death," replied Pechorin, smiling.

"Remember how we used to live in the fort? Wonderful hunting country, wasn't it? How you loved to hunt! Remember Bela?"

Pechorin paled a little and turned away.

"Yes, I remember," he said, deliberately yawning almost in the same breath.

Maxim Maximych urged him to stay on for another hour or two. "We'll have a fine dinner," he said. "I have two pheasants, and the Kakhetian here is excellent . . . not the same as in Georgia, of course, but the best to be had here. And we could talk . . . you will tell me about your stay in St. Petersburg, won't you?"

"I really have nothing to tell, dear Maxim Maximych. And I have to say good-bye now, for I must be off. . . . In rather a hurry. . . . It was kind of you not to have forgotten me," he added, taking the old man's hand.

The old man frowned. He was both grieved and hurt, though he did his best to conceal his feeling. "Forgotten!" he muttered. "No, I've forgotten nothing. Oh well, never mind. . . . Only I did not expect our meeting would be like this."

"Come, now, that will do," said Pechorin, embracing him in a friendly way. "I don't think I have changed. At any rate, it can't be helped. We all are destined to go our several ways. God knows whether we'll meet again." This he said as he climbed into the carriage and the coachman was already gathering in the reins.

"Wait a minute, wait a minute!" Maxim Maximych suddenly shouted, seizing hold of the carriage door. "It completely slipped my mind. . . . I still have your papers, Grigori Alexandrovich. . . . Been carrying them around with me. . . . Thought I'd find you in Georgia, never dreaming the Lord would have us meet here. . . . What shall I do with them?"

"Whatever you wish," replied Pechorin. "Farewell!"

"So you are off to Persia.... When do you expect to be back?" Maxim Maximych shouted after him.

The carriage was already some distance off, but Pechorin waved in a way that could well be interpreted to mean: "I doubt whether I shall return, nor is there any reason why I should!"

Long after the tinkling of the bell and the clatter of wheels against the flinty surface of the road had faded into the distance, the poor old man stood glued to the spot, lost in his thoughts.

"Yes," he said at last, trying his best to preserve a nonchalant air though tears of disappointment still showed in his eyes, "we were friends, of course, but what is friendship nowadays? What am I to him? I am neither rich nor titled, and, besides, I am far too old. What a fop his visit to St. Petersburg has made him! Look at that carriage, and the pile of luggage and the haughty valet!" This he said with an ironic smile. "Tell me," he went on, turning to me, "what do you think of it all? What sort of a demon is driving him to Persia now? Queer, isn't it? I knew all along, of course, that he was the flighty sort of fellow you can't count on. It's a pity though that he should come to a bad end ... but there's nothing for it, as you can see. I've always said that nothing good will come of those who forget old friends." At that he turned away to conceal his agitation and began pacing up and down the courtyard beside his carriage, pretending to examine the wheels, while the tears kept welling in his eyes.

"Maxim Maximych," said I, walking up to him. "What were the papers Pechorin left you?"

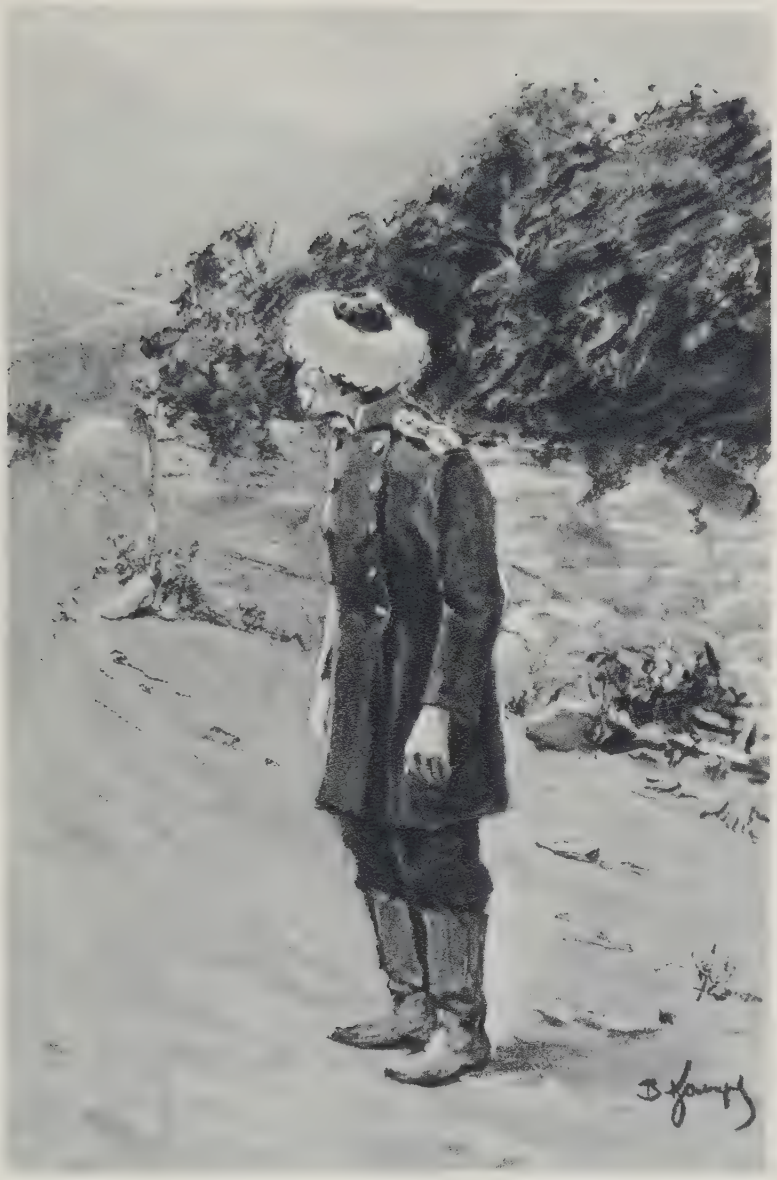
"The Lord knows! Some notes or other...."

"What do you intend to do with them?"

"Eh? I'll have them made into cartridges."

"You'd better give them to me."

He looked at me in amazement, muttered something under his breath and began to rummage through his portmanteau. He took out one notebook and threw it contemptuously on the ground. The second, the third and the tenth all shared the fate of the first. There was something



childish about the old man's resentment, and I was both amused and sorry for him.

"That's the lot," he said. "I congratulate you on your find."

"And I may do whatever I want with them?"

"Print them in the papers if you like, what do I care? Yes, indeed, am I a friend of his or a relative? True, we shared the same roof for a long time, but then I have lived with all sorts of people."

I seized the papers and carried them off before the captain could change his mind. Soon we were told that the *okazia* would set out in an hour, and I gave orders to harness the horses. The captain came into my room as I was putting on my hat. He showed no sign of preparing for the journey; there was a strained coldness about him.

"Aren't you coming, Maxim Maximych?"

"No."

"Why?"

"I haven't seen the commandant, and I have to deliver some government property to him."

"But didn't you go to see him?"

"Yes, of course," he stammered, "but he wasn't in and I didn't wait for him."

I understood what he meant. For the first time in his life, perhaps, the poor old man had neglected his duties for *his own convenience*, to put it in official language, and this had been his reward!

"I am very sorry, Maxim Maximych," I said, "very sorry indeed, that we have to part so soon."

"How can we ignorant old fogies keep up with you haughty young men of the world; here, with Cherkess bullets flying about, you put up with us somehow . . . but if we chanced to meet later on you would be ashamed to shake hands with the likes of us."

"I have not deserved this reproof, Maxim Maximych."

"I'm speaking in general, you know, at any rate I wish you luck and a pleasant journey."

We parted rather frigidly. Good Maxim Maximych was now an obstinate, cantankerous captain. And why? Because Pechorin through absent-mindedness or for some other reason had merely extended his hand when his old friend wanted to fall on his neck. It is sad to see a young man's finest hopes and dreams shattered, to see him lose the rosy illusions with which he viewed man's deeds and emotions, although there is still hope that he may exchange the old delusions for new ones no less transitory but also no less sweet. But what is there to exchange them for at Maxim Maximych's age? Without wishing it, the heart would harden and the soul wither....

I set out alone.

PECHORIN'S DIARY

FOREWORD

RECENTLY I learned that Pechorin had died on his way back from Persia This news pleased me very much, for it gave me the right to publish these notes, and I took advantage of the opportunity to sign my name to another man's work. God forbid that the reader should penalize me for such an innocent deception!

Now I must explain briefly what it was that spurred me to make public the innermost secrets of a man I never knew. It might have been understandable had I been his friend; for the perfidious indiscretion of the true friend is something everyone can appreciate. But I saw him only once for a fleeting moment, and hence cannot regard him with that inexplicable hatred which, concealed under the mask of friendship, only waits for death or misfortune to overtake the object of affection in order to bring down upon his head a hailstorm of remonstrances, advice, mockery and commiseration.

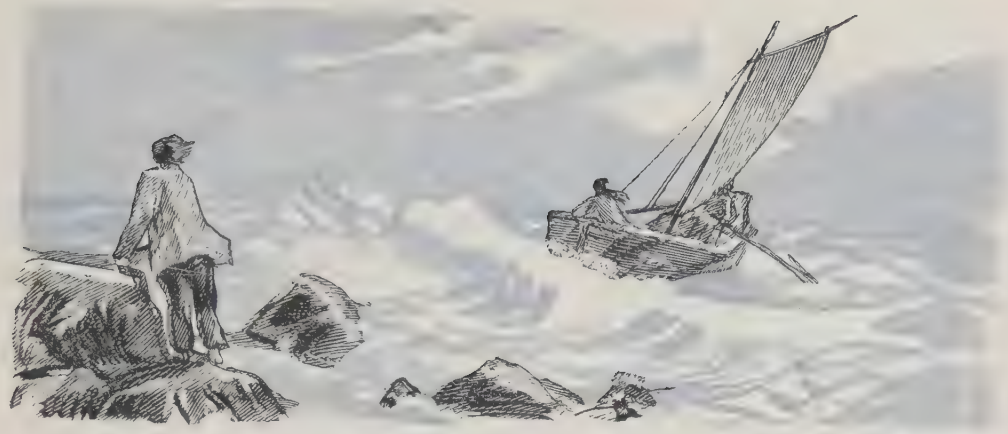
Reading over these notes, I became convinced that the man must have been sincere in so mercilessly laying bare his own weaknesses and vices. The story of a human soul, even the pettiest of souls, is no less interesting and instructive than the story of a nation, especially if it is the result of the observation of a mature mind and written without the vain desire to evoke

compassion or wonder. One of the defects of Rousseau's Confessions is that he read it to his friends.

Thus it was purely the desire to do some good that impelled me to publish excerpts from the diary I happened to acquire. Though I have changed all proper names, those mentioned in it will no doubt recognize themselves and perhaps find justification for deeds they have held against a man who is no longer of this world. For we nearly always forgive that which we understand.

I have included in this book only excerpts bearing on Pechorin's stay in the Caucasus. This still leaves me with a thick notebook in which he tells the story of his whole life. Some day it too will be submitted to public judgment; now, however, I dare not take the responsibility upon myself for many important reasons.

Some readers will probably want to know what I think of Pechorin's character. My reply may be found in the title of this book. "But that is bitter irony!" they will say. I do not know.



I

TAMAN

TAMAN is the most wretched of all seaboard towns in Russia. I very nearly died of hunger there, and was almost drowned into the bargain. I arrived by post chaise late at night. The coachman stopped his tired troika at the gate of the only brick building, which stood at the entrance to the town. Roused from a doze by the tinkling of the carriage bell, the Black Sea Cossack on sentry duty shouted wildly: "Who goes there?" A Cossack sergeant and a local policeman emerged from the building. I explained that I was an officer on my way to a line unit on official business and demanded lodgings for the night. The policeman took us around town. All the cottages we stopped at were occupied. It was chilly, and, not having slept for three nights running, I was exhausted and began to lose my temper. "Take me anywhere you want, you scoundrel! To the devil, if you please, as long as there's a place to stay!" I shouted. "There is still one place left," the policeman replied, scratching the back of his head. "Only you will not like it, sir; there are queer goings on there!"

Failing to grasp the precise meaning of the last remark, I told him to go ahead, and after wandering about for a long time in muddy alleys lined with rickety fences, we drove up to a small hut on the seashore.

A full moon lit up the reed roof and white walls of my prospective dwelling. In the courtyard, which was fenced in by a crude stone wall, stood another miserable, crooked hut, smaller and older than the first. A cliff dropped abruptly to the sea from the very walls of the hut, and down below the dark blue waves broke against the shore with an incessant roar. The moon looked down serenely upon the restless but obedient sea, and by its light I could discern two ships at anchor far from the shore, their black rigging a motionless cobweb against the paler background of the skyline. "There are ships in the anchorage," thought I. "Tomorrow I shall leave for Gelenjik."

A Cossack from a line unit served as my batman. Telling him to take down my portmanteau and dismiss the driver, I called for the master of the house. There was no answer. I knocked, and still there was no reply. What could it mean? Finally a boy of about fourteen appeared on the porch.

"Where is the master?" "No master." "What? You mean there is no master at all?" "None at all." "And the mistress?" "Gone to town." "Who's going to open the door for me?" said I, kicking at it. The door opened by itself, and a dank smell came from the hut. I struck a sulphur match and brought it close to the youngster's nose, and in its light I saw two white eyes. He was blind, totally blind from birth. As he stood motionless before me I looked closely into his face.

I admit that I am greatly prejudiced against all the blind, squint-eyed, deaf, dumb, legless, armless, hunchbacked and so on. I have observed that there is always some strange relationship between the external appearance of a man and his soul, as if with the loss of a limb the soul too lost some faculty of feeling.

So I examined the blind lad's face, but what would you have me read on a face without eyes? I looked at him long with involuntary pity when a faint smile flitted across his thin lips, making, I know not why, the most

unpleasant impression on me. A suspicion that he was not as blind as he seemed flashed through my mind, and in vain I tried to assure myself that it is impossible to simulate a cataract. And why should anyone do that? But I couldn't help suspecting, for I am often inclined to form preconceived notions.

"Are you the master's son?" I asked him at last. "Nay." "Then who are you?" "Orphan, a poor orphan." "Has the mistress any children?" "Nay. There was a daughter but she ran away across the sea with a Tatar." "What kind of a Tatar?" "The devil knows! A Crimean Tatar, a boatman from Kerch."

I walked into the hut. Two benches, a table and a huge trunk next to the stove were the sole furnishings. Not a single icon was there on the wall—a bad sign that! The sea wind blew in through a broken window. I extracted the stub of a wax candle from my portmanteau and lighting it began to lay out my things. I put my sword and gun in a corner, laid my pistols on the table, and spread out my cloak on a bench while the Cossack laid out his on the other. In ten minutes he was snoring, but I could not sleep; the lad with the white eyes kept swimming before me in the gloom.

About an hour passed in this way. The moon shone into the window and a beam of light played on the earthen floor of the hut. Suddenly a shadow darted across the bright strip on the floor. I got up and looked out of the window. Someone again ran past and disappeared, God knows where. It did not seem possible that the creature could have run down the cliff to the shore, yet he could not have gone anywhere else. I got up, put on my *beshmet*, girded on a dagger and stole out of the hut. The blind boy was coming toward me. I drew close to the fence, and he went past with sure though cautious tread. He carried a bundle under his arm. Turning toward the boat landing, he began the descent along a narrow, steep path. "The blind receive their sight, and the deaf hear," I thought, following close enough not to lose sight of him.

In the meantime clouds began to envelop the moon and a fog rose at sea. Then stern light of the ship nearest the shore was barely visible through

it. On the shore gleamed the foam of the breakers, which threatened to submerge it any moment. Picking my way with difficulty down the steep incline, I saw the blind boy stop, then turn to the right and proceed so close to the water that it seemed the waves must surely seize him and carry him out to sea. It was obvious, however, that this was not the first time he was making the journey, judging by the confidence with which he stepped from stone to stone and avoided the holes. At last he stopped as if listening for something, then sat down on the ground with his bundle beside him. Hidden behind a projecting cliff I watched his movements. A few minutes later a figure in white appeared from the other side, walked up to the blind boy and sat down beside him. The wind carried fragments of their conversation to me.

"What do you say, blind one?" a woman's voice said. "The gale is too heavy; Yanko won't come." "Yanko is not afraid of gales," the other replied. "The fog is thickening," came the woman's voice again with a note of sadness.

"It will be easier to slip by the patrol ships in the fog," was the reply. "What if he is drowned?" "Well, what of it? You'll go to church on Sunday without a new ribbon."

A silence followed. I was struck, however, by one thing: the blind boy had spoken to me in the Ukrainian dialect, and now he was speaking pure Russian.

"You see, I am right," said the blind boy again, clapping his hands. "Yanko does not fear the sea, or the winds, or the fog, or yet the coast patrols. Listen, that's not the waves splashing, you can't fool me; those are his long oars."

The woman jumped up and peered anxiously into the distance.

"You're raving, blind one," she said. "I don't see anything."

I must admit that, strain as I did, I failed to discern anything like a boat in the distance. Some ten minutes had passed thus when a black speck now growing larger, now diminishing, appeared among the mountainous billows. Slowly climbing to the crests of the waves and sharply dropping

into the troughs, the boat approached the shore. It was an intrepid oarsman who ventured on a night like this to cross the twenty versts of the strait, and the reason that spurred him on must have been pressing indeed. Thus thinking, my heart involuntarily quickening its beat, I watched the frail craft dive with the dexterity of a duck and then leap up from the watery chasm through the flying foam with a swift movement of the oars that recalled the thrust of wings. I thought it must surely crash full force against the shore and be dashed to pieces, but it neatly swung around and slipped safely into a tiny bay. A man of medium stature wearing a Tatar sheepskin cap stepped from the boat. He motioned with his hand and all three commenced to haul something from the craft; the cargo was so great that to this day I cannot understand why the boat had not sunk. Each shouldering a bundle, they set out along the shore and I soon lost sight of them. I had to return to my lodgings. I must admit, however, that all these strange doings alarmed me, and I could hardly wait for the morning.

My Cossack was very much surprised when upon waking up he found me fully dressed, but I gave him no explanation. After admiring for some time the blue sky mottled with ragged little clouds and the Crimean coast which spread out in a line of mauve in the distance and ended in a crag topped by the white tower of a lighthouse, I set out for the Fanagoria fort to inquire at the commandant's when I could leave for Gelenjik.

But, alas, the commandant was unable to tell me anything definite. The vessels in the harbour were either coastguard ships or merchant boats which had not even begun loading. "Perhaps there will be a packet-boat in three or four days," the commandant said, "and then we shall see." I returned to my lodgings morose and angry. My Cossack met me at the door with a scared look on his face.

"Looks bad, sir!" he said.

"Yes, my friend. Who knows when we shall get away!" Now he looked still more worried. Bending toward me, he whispered:

"It's uncanny here! Today I met the sergeant of the Black Sea Cossacks; I happen to know him, we were in the same detachment last

year. When I told him where we'd stopped he said to me: 'Brother, it's unclean there; the people are no good!' And come to think of it, what sort of a fellow is this blind chap? Goes everywhere alone, to the market for bread, and to fetch water. You can see they're used to that sort of thing here."

"What of it? Has the mistress of the house appeared at least?"

"While you were out an old woman came with her daughter."

"What daughter? She has no daughter."

"God knows who she is then. The old woman is in the hut now."

I went inside. The stove had been heated well and a dinner rather sumptuous for poor folk was cooking. To all my questions the old woman replied that she was deaf and could not hear me. What could I do? I addressed the blind boy, who was sitting in front of the stove feeding brushwood into the fire. "Now tell me, you blind imp," said I, taking hold of his ear, "where did you go last night with that bundle, eh?" He burst into tears and began howling and wailing: "Where'd I go? Nowhere. And I don't know of any bundle." This time the old woman heard what was going on and began to grumble: "Of all the things to imagine, and about the poor wretch, too! Why can't you leave him alone? What has he done to you?" This disgusted me and I walked out firmly resolved to find the key to the riddle.

I wrapped my cloak around me and sat down on a boulder beside the wall, gazing into the distance. Before me spread the sea agitated by last night's gale, and its monotonous roar like the murmuring of a city falling into slumber reminded me of bygone years, carrying my thoughts to the North, to our frigid capital. Stirred by memories I forgot all else. An hour and perhaps more passed thus. Suddenly something like a song caught my ear. It was a song, and the voice was pleasant, feminine, but where did it come from? I listened to it; it was a strange melody, now slow and plaintive, now fast and lively. I looked around, but saw no one; I listened again, and the sound seemed to drop from the heavens. I looked up, and on the roof of the hut I saw a girl in a striped dress, a real mermaid with loosened

tresses. Shading her eyes from the sun with her hand, she was peering into the distance, now smiling and talking to herself, now picking up the song again.

I memorized the song word for word:

Over boundless billows green,
Over billows surging.
Fly the ships with sails a-spread,
Onward urging.
There among those ships at sea,
Sails my shallop sprightly,
Curtsying to wind and wave,
Kissed by combers lightly.
Stormy winds begin to blow,
Stately ships a-rocking,
Widely do they spread their wings—
To leeward flocking.
The angry ocean then I pray,
Bending low before him:
"Spare my barque, O fearsome one!"—
Thus do I implore him.—
"Precious goods are stowed on board!—
Fierce the sea is foaming!—
Keep her safe—a madcap steers
Through the gloaming!"

It occurred to me that I had heard the same voice the night before. For a moment I was lost in thought, and when I looked up at the roof again, the girl was no longer there. Suddenly she tripped past me, singing a different tune; snapping her fingers, she ran in to the old woman, and I heard their voices rise in argument. The old woman grew very angry but the girl

merely laughed aloud. A short while later my mermaid came skipping along again. As she approached me she paused and looked me straight in the eyes, as if surprised at finding me there. Then she turned away carelessly and went quietly down to the boat landing. This, however, was not the end of it: all day long she hovered around my quarters, singing and skipping about without a moment's respite. She was a strange creature indeed. There was nothing insane about her expression; on the contrary, her eyes inspected me with keen penetration, they seemed to be endowed with some magnetic power, and each glance appeared to invite a question, but as soon as I opened my mouth to speak she ran away, smiling artfully.

Never had I seen a woman like her. She was far from beautiful, though I have my preconceived notions as regards beauty as well. There was much of the thoroughbred in her, and in women as in horses that is a great thing; this discovery belongs to young France. It (I mean pedigree, not young France) is betrayed mainly by the walk and by the hands and feet, and particularly indicative is the nose. In Russia a classic nose is rarer than small feet. My songstress looked no more than eighteen. Her extraordinarily graceful figure, the peculiar way she had of tilting her head, her long auburn hair, the golden sheen of her slightly sun-tanned neck and shoulders, and especially her finely chiselled nose enchanted me. Though I could read something wild and suspicious in her sidelong glances and though there was something indefinable in her smile, the preconceived notions got the better of me. The chiselled nose carried me off my feet, and I fancied I had found Goethe's Mignon, that queer figment of his German imagination. And indeed, there was much in common between the two, the same swift transitions from supreme agitation to utter immobility, the same puzzling conversation, the same gambolling and the same strange songs. . . .

Toward evening I stopped her in the doorway and engaged her in the following conversation:

"Tell me, my pretty one," I asked, "what were you doing on the roof today?" "Looking where the wind blows from." "Why" "Whence the wind

blows, thence happiness." "Indeed, were you invoking happiness by song?" "Where there is song there is also good fortune." "Supposing you sing grief for yourself?" "What of it? If things will not be better, they'll be worse, and then it's not so far from bad to good." "Who taught you that song?" "No one taught it to me. I sing whatever comes to my mind; he to whom I sing will hear; others will not understand." "What is your name, my nightingale?" "Whoever named me knows." "And who named you?" "How should I know?" "You are sly! But I've learned something about you." There was no change in her expression, not even a trembling of her lips, as if it all were no concern of hers. "I know that you went down to the shore last night." Assuming an air of importance I told her everything I had seen, hoping to disconcert her, but in vain! She only burst out laughing. "You saw a lot but know little; and what you do know you'd best keep under lock and key." "Supposing I took it into my head to report to the commandant?" I adopted a very serious, even severe mien. Suddenly she bounded off and began singing, disappearing like a bird frightened into flight. My last remark was entirely out of place, though at the time I did not suspect its full purport and only later had occasion to regret ever having made it.

It was beginning to grow dark and I told the Cossack to put on the kettle, lighted a candle and sat at the table smoking my travelling pipe. I was already finishing my second glass of tea when the door suddenly creaked and I heard the soft rustle of a dress and light footsteps behind me. I started and turned around: it was she, my undine! She sat down opposite me without a word and looked at me with eyes that for some unfathomable reason seemed full of sweet tenderness; they reminded me of eyes that years before had so despotically ruled my life. She seemed to wait for me to speak, but I was too confused to say a word. The deathly pallor of her face betrayed the tumult within her; her hand aimlessly wandered over the table and I noticed that it trembled; now her bosom rose high, now she seemed to be holding her breath. The comedy began to pall and I was ready to cut it short in the most prosaic fashion by offering her a glass of tea when she jumped up, entwined

her arms around my neck and planted a moist, fiery kiss on my lips. Everything went dark before my eyes, my head swam, and I embraced her with all my youthful passion, but she slipped like a serpent from my arms, whispering in my ear: "Meet me on the shore tonight after everyone is asleep," and ran out of the room as swift as an arrow. In the passageway she upset the tea-kettle and the candle standing on the floor. "She-devil!" shouted the Cossack, who had made himself comfortable on some straw and was intending to warm himself with the tea I had left. I came to myself with a start.

Some two hours later when all was quiet I roused my Cossack. "If you hear a pistol shot," I told him, "run down to the waterfront." He opened his eyes wide but replied mechanically: "Yes, sir." I stuck a pistol under my belt and went out. She was waiting for me at the top of the slope, more than flimsily clad, a small shawl tied around her slender form.

"Follow me," she said, taking me by the hand, and we started down the embankment. I do not know how I managed not to break my neck. At the bottom we turned to the right and took the path along which I had followed the blind boy the night before. The moon had not risen yet, and only two stars like two distant lighthouses shone in the dark blue sky. The swell came in at even, regular intervals, barely lifting the lone boat moored to the shore. "Let's get into the boat," said my companion. I hesitated, for I have no predilection for sentimental sea jaunts, but this was not the time to retreat. She jumped into the boat and I followed, and before I knew it we had cast off. "What does this mean?" I asked, angrily now. "It means," she said as she pushed me on to a seat and wrapped her arms around me, "that I love you." She pressed her cheek against mine and I felt her breath hot on my face. Suddenly something splashed into the water; I reached for my belt, but the pistol was gone. Now a terrible suspicion crept into my heart and the blood rushed to my head. Looking around I saw we were already some fifty sagenes from the shore, and I unable to swim! I wanted to push her away, but she clung to my clothes like a cat, then gave me a sharp push

that nearly threw me overboard. The boat rocked dangerously, but I regained my balance, and a desperate struggle began between us. Fury gave me strength, but I soon noticed that my adversary was more agile than I. "What do you want!" I shouted, gripping her small hands. I could hear her fingers crack, but she did not cry out; her snakelike nature was superior to the pain.

"You saw what happened," she replied, "and you will report on us." With a superhuman effort she forced me against the gunwale until we both hung perilously over the water and her hair dipped into it. The moment was decisive. I braced my knee against the side of the boat and seized her by the hair with one hand and the throat with the other. She let go of my clothes and in a flash I had hurled her into the sea.

It was already quite dark and after seeing her head bob up a couple of times in the foam I lost sight of her completely.

I found a piece of an old oar at the bottom of the boat, and after a great deal of effort managed to get to the landing. As I was making my way along the shore back to the hut, my eyes turned towards the spot where the blind boy had waited for the nocturnal boatman the night before. The moon was coming up and in its light I thought I saw a white-garbed figure sitting on the shore. Spurred on by curiosity I crept toward it and lay down in the grass on top of a bluff rising from the shore; by raising my head slightly I could observe everything that happened below, and I was neither too surprised nor sorry to find my mermaid there. She was wringing the sea water from her hair, and I noticed how her wet clothes outlined her lithe form and high bosom. Soon a boat appeared in the distance and quickly approached the shore. Like the night before, a man stepped out of it wearing a Tatar cap, though his hair was cropped in Cossack fashion, and he had a large knife stuck under his belt. "Yanko," she said, "everything is lost!" They continued talking, but in so low a voice that I could not hear a word. "And where is the blind one?" Yanko finally asked in a louder tone. "I sent him off," was the reply. A few minutes later the blind boy appeared carrying a bag on his back. This was put into the boat.

"Listen, blind one," said Yanko, "take care of that spot, you know what I mean? There's a wealth of goods there.... And tell (the name I could not make out) that I am no longer his servant. Things have turned out badly and he'll see me no more. It's dangerous to go on. I'm going to look for work elsewhere; he won't find another daredevil like me. And tell him that had he paid more generously Yanko wouldn't have left him. I can always make my way wherever the wind blows and the sea roars!" After a brief pause, Yanko continued: "I'll take her with me, for she can't stay behind, and tell the old woman it's time she died; she's lived long enough and ought to know when her time's up. She'll never see us again."

"What about me?" the blind boy whimpered.

"What do I need you for?" was the answer.

In the meantime my undine had jumped into the boat and was waving to her comrade. Yanko put something into the blind boy's hand and muttered: "Here, buy yourself some ginger cakes." "Is that all?" asked the blind one. "All right, take this too." The coin rang as it fell on the stones. The blind boy did not pick it up. Yanko got into the boat, and as the wind was blowing out to sea, they raised a small sail and quickly slipped into the distance. For a long time the white sail was visible among the dark waves in the moonlight. The blind boy remained sitting on the shore, and I heard something that sounded like sobbing: it was the blind boy weeping, and he wept for a long, long time.... A sadness came over me. Why did fate have to throw me into the peaceful lives of *honest smugglers*? Like a stone hurled into the placid surface of a well I had disturbed their tranquillity, and like a stone had nearly gone to the bottom myself!

I returned to my quarters. In the passage a candle spluttered its last on a wooden platter, while my Cossack, orders notwithstanding, was fast asleep gripping a gun with both hands. I did not disturb him, and picking up the candle went into the room. But alas, my box, silver-inlaid sabre and a Daghestan dagger which I had received as a present from a friend had vanished. Now I guessed what the confounded blind boy had carried. Rous-

ing the Cossack with scant ceremony, I swore at him and raged, but there was nothing that could be done about it any more. And would it not have been ludicrous for me to complain to my superiors that I had been robbed by a blind boy and that an eighteen-year-old girl had all but drowned me? Thank God an opportunity offered itself the following morning to travel farther, and I left Taman. What happened later to the old woman and the poor blind boy, I do not know. And, after all, what have human joys and sorrows to do with me, an itinerant officer, and one travelling on official business to boot!

END OF PART ONE

PART TWO

CONCLUSION OF PECHORIN'S DIARY

II

PRINCESS MARY

May 11

YESTERDAY I arrived in Pyatigorsk and rented quarters in the outskirts at the foot of Mashuk; this is the highest part of the town, so high that the clouds will reach down to my roof during thunderstorms. When I opened the window at five o'clock this morning the fragrance of the flowers growing in the modest little front garden flooded my room. The flower-laden branches of the cherry-trees peep into my windows, and now and then the wind strews my writing-desk with the white petals. I have a marvellous view on three sides. Five-peaked Beshtau looms blue in the west like "the last cloud of a dispersed storm"; in the north rises Mashuk like a shaggy Persian cap concealing this part of the horizon. To the east the view is gayer: down below the clean new town spreads colourfully before me, the medicinal fountains babble and so do the multilingual crowds, farther in the distance the massive amphitheatre

of mountains grows ever bluer and mistier, while on the fringe of the horizon stretches the silvery chain of snow-capped peaks beginning with Kazbek and ending with twin-peaked Elbrus.... It is a joy to live in a country like this! A feeling of elation flows in all my veins. The air is pure and fresh like the kiss of a child, the sun is bright and the sky blue—what more could one desire? What place is there left for passions, yearnings and regrets? But it's time to go. I shall walk down to Elizabeth Springs where they say the spa society congregates in the mornings.

. . . . . .

Upon reaching the centre of the town I took the boulevard where I encountered several melancholy groups slowly climbing the hill. That most of them were landed families from the plains was obvious from the threadbare, old-fashioned coats of the men and the dainty dresses of the wives and daughters. They evidently had all the eligible young men at the watering place marked out, for they looked at me with fond curiosity. The Petersburg cut of my coat deceived them at first, but discovering my army epaulettes they soon turned away in disgust.

The wives of the local officials, the hostesses of the springs, so to say, were more graciously inclined. They carry lorgnettes and pay less attention to the uniform, for in the Caucasus they have learned to find ardent hearts under brass buttons and enlightened minds under white forage caps. These ladies are very charming, and remain charming for a long time! Their admirers are renewed every year, which perhaps explains the secret of their indefatigable amiability. As I climbed up the narrow path leading to Elizabeth Springs I passed a crowd of men, both civilians and military, who, as I discovered later, form a class in itself among those who keep vigil at the fount. They drink, but not water, go out but little, philander in a desultory way; they gamble and complain of boredom. They are fops; they assume academic poses as they dip their wickered tumblers into the sulphur water; the civilians flaunt pale-blue cravats, and the armymen, ruffs showing above their collars. They affect deep disdain for provincial society and

sigh at the thought of aristocratic drawing-rooms of the capital which are closed to them.

Here at last is the well.... On a site nearby, a little red-roofed building has been raised over the baths, and farther on, a gallery to shelter the promenaders when it rains. Several wounded officers—pale, sad-looking men—sat on a bench holding their crutches in front of them. Several ladies were briskly pacing back and forth, waiting for the water to take effect. Among them were two or three pretty faces. Through the avenues of vines that cover the slope of Mashuk I caught an occasional glimpse of a gay bonnet evidently belonging to a votaress of privacy for two as it was invariably accompanied by an army cap or an ugly round hat. On a steep cliff where there is a pavilion named the Aeolian Harp, sightseers were aiming a telescope at Elbrus; among them were two tutors with their charges who had come here in search of a cure for king's evil.

Panting, I had stopped at the brink of the precipice and was leaning against a corner of the building surveying the picturesque locality when I suddenly heard a familiar voice behind me:

"Pechorin! Been here long?"

I turned around and saw Grushnitsky. We embraced. I had met him in a line unit. He had a bullet wound in the leg and had left for the watering place a week earlier than I.

Grushnitsky is a cadet. He has served only a year and wears a heavy soldier's greatcoat which he flaunts as his particular brand of foppery. He has a soldier's Cross of St. George. He is well-built, swarthy and dark-haired, and looks twenty-five though he can scarcely be more than twenty-one. He has a way of throwing his head back when talking, and he constantly twirls his moustache with his left hand for his right is engaged leaning on his crutch. His speech is glib and florid; he is one of those who have a pompous phrase ready for every occasion, who are unmoved by simple beauty and who grandly assume a garb of extraordinary emotions, exalted passions and exquisite anguish. They delight in creating an impression, and

romantic provincial ladies are infatuated with them to the point of distraction. In their old age they become either peaceable landlords or drunkards, sometimes both. Often their souls have many kindly qualities but not a particle of poetry. Grushnitsky used to have a passion for declaiming; he would shower you under with words as soon as the conversation transcended the bounds of everyday concepts, and I could never argue with him. He neither answers your rebuttal nor listens to what you have to say. As soon as you stop, he launches upon a long tirade which on the face of it seems to have some bearing on what you have said, but actually amounts only to a continuation of his own argument.

He is rather witty and his epigrams are frequently amusing but never pointed or malicious; he does not annihilate a person with one word. He knows neither people nor their foibles, for all his life he has been preoccupied with himself alone. His object in life is to become the hero of a romance. So often has he tried to make others believe he is a creature never intended for this world and hence doomed to some kind of occult suffering that he has practically convinced himself of it. That is why he vaunts of his heavy soldier's greatcoat. I see through him and he dislikes me for it, though on the face of it we are on the friendliest of terms. Grushnitsky has a reputation for superb courage; I have seen him in action: he brandishes his sabre, and dashes forward shouting with his eyes shut. There is something very un-Russian in that brand of gallantry!

I do not like him either, and I feel we are bound to fall foul of each other one day with rueful consequences for one of us.

His coming to the Caucasus too was the result of his romantic fanaticism. I am certain that on the eve of his departure from his father's village he tragically announced to some comely neighbour that he was not going merely to serve in the army, but to seek death, because . . . at this point he probably covered his eyes with his hand and went on like this: "No, you must not know the reason! Your pure soul would shudder at the thought! And why should you? What am I to you? Can you understand me?" and so on and so forth.

He told me himself that the reason why he enlisted in the K. regiment will forever remain a secret between him and his Maker.

And yet when he discards his tragic guise Grushnitsky can be quite pleasant and amusing. I would like to see him in the company of women, for I imagine that is when he would try to be at his best.

We greeted each other as old friends. I began to ply him with questions concerning life at the spa and the interesting people there were to be met.

"We lead a rather prosaic life," he sighed. "Those who drink the waters in the mornings are listless like all sick people, and those who drink wine in the evenings are unbearable like all people who enjoy good health. There is feminine company, but it offers little consolation; they play whist, dress badly and speak terrible French. This year Princess Ligovskaya with her daughter are the only visitors from Moscow, but I have not met them. My greatcoat is like a brand of ostracism. The sympathy it evokes is as unwelcome as charity."

Just then two ladies walked past us toward the spring, one elderly, the other young and slender. I could not see their faces for the bonnets, but they were dressed in strict conformity with the very best taste: everything was as it should be. The young woman wore a high-necked pearl-grey dress; a dainty silk kerchief encircled her supple neck. A pair of dark-brown shoes encased her slender little feet up to the ankles so daintily that even one uninitiated into the mysteries of beauty would have caught his breath, if only in amazement. Her light but dignified gait had something virginal about it that eluded definition yet was perceptible to the eye. As she walked past us, that subtle fragrance was wafted from her which sometimes is exhaled by a note from a woman we love.

"That is Princess Ligovskaya," said Grushnitsky, "and her daughter, whom she calls Mary in the English manner. They've been here only three days."

"You seem to know her name already."

"Heard it quite by accident," he replied, colouring. "I must confess I have no desire to meet them. These haughty aristocrats think we armymen

are savages. What is it to them if there is an intellect under a numbered cap and a heart beneath a thick greatcoat?"

"Poor greatcoat," said I, smiling. "And who is the gentleman going up to them and so obligingly offering them a tumbler?"

"Oh, that's the Moscow dandy Rayevich! He's a gambler, as you can see by the heavy gold chain across his blue waistcoat. And look at that thick cane—just like Robinson Crusoe's! Or the beard he sports, and the haircut *à la moujik.*"

"You seem to bear a grudge against the whole human race."

"And with good reason. . . ."

"Really?"

By this time the ladies had left the well and were again passing us. Grushnitsky hastened to strike a dramatic pose with the help of his crutch and replied loudly in French:

"Mon cher, je hais les hommes pour ne pas les mépriser, car autrement la vie serait une farce trop dégoûtante."

The attractive Princess turned and bestowed on the speaker a long and searching glance. It was an obscure kind of look, but without a trace of mockery, on which I mentally congratulated him from the bottom of my heart.

"This Princess Mary is most charming," I said to him. "Her eyes are like velvet, yes, velvet. I would advise you to adopt this expression when you talk about her eyes; the eyelashes, both upper and lower, are so long that the sunbeams find no reflection in her pupils. I love eyes like that—without a shine in them, and so soft that they seem to be caressing you. By the way, I think they are the only good point in her face. . . . Are her teeth white? That is very important! It's pity she did not smile at your grandiloquence."

"You talk about a charming woman as if she were an English thoroughbred," said Grushnitsky indignantly.

"*Mon cher*," I replied, trying to fall into tone, "*je méprise es femmes pour ne pas les aimer, car autrement la vie serait un mélodrame trop ridicule.*"

I turned and walked off. For half an hour I strolled along the vine-clad walks, along the limestone cliffs and among the low bushes between them, until it grew hot and I hurried home. As I passed by the sulphur spring I stopped to rest in the shade of the covered gallery and thus became a witness of a rather curious spectacle. This is how the actors were placed. The old Princess was sitting with the Moscow fop on a bench in the gallery and seemed to be engaged in a serious conversation. The young Princess, having apparently drunk her last glassful of water, was pacing thoughtfully up and down by the well. Grushnitsky was standing at the well. There was no one else around.

I went up closer and hid behind a corner of the gallery. Just then Grushnitsky dropped his tumbler on the sand and tried to stoop to pick it up, but his wounded leg made it hard for him. Poor chap! How he tried, leaning against the crutch, but in vain. His expressive face actually registered pain.

Princess Mary saw this better than I did.

Quicker than a bird she was at his side, bent down, picked up the tumbler and handed it to him with an inexpressibly sweet gesture; then she blushed furiously, cast a glance in the direction of the gallery, but seeing that her mother had not noticed anything, immediately regained her composure. When Grushnitsky opened his mouth to thank her she was already far away. A minute later she left the gallery in the company of her mother and the dandy, but as she passed Grushnitsky she assumed a most prim and proper air, not even turning her head in his direction or noticing the fervent gaze with which he escorted her until she disappeared behind the lime-trees of the boulevard at the foot of the hill.... He caught a last glimpse of her bonnet on the other side of the street as she ran into the gateway of one of the finest houses in Pyatigorsk. Behind her walked the old Princess, who bid farewell to Rayevich at the gate.

Only now did the poor smitten cadet become aware of my presence.

"Did you see it?" he asked, gripping my hand firmly. "She's simply an angel!"

"Why?" asked I feigning utter innocence.

"Didn't you see?"

"Of course, I saw how she picked up your tumbler. If there had been a park-keeper around he would have done the same, only quicker in hopes of getting a tip. Though there is nothing surprising that she took pity on you; you made such an awful face when you stepped on your wounded leg. . . ."

"Weren't you moved when you saw her soul shining in her eyes?"

"No."

I was lying, but I wanted to rouse him. I have an inborn urge to contradict; my whole life has been a mere chain of sad and futile opposition to the dictates of either heart or reason. The presence of an enthusiast makes me as cold as a midwinter's day, and I believe frequent association with a listless phlegmatic would make me an impassioned dreamer. I must also admit that momentarily an unpleasant but familiar sensation lightly crept over my heart; that sensation was envy. I say "envy" frankly, because I am accustomed to being honest with myself. And it is unlikely that any young man (a man of the world accustomed to indulging his vanities, of course), who, having met a woman who attracted his idle fancy, would not be unpleasantly impressed upon seeing her favour another men no less a stranger than he.

Grushnitsky and I descended the hill in silence and walked down the boulevard past the windows of the house which our beauty had entered. She was sitting at the window. Tugging at my sleeve, Grushnitsky gave her one of those mistily tender looks that evoke so little response in women. I directed my lorgnette at her and saw that Grushnitsky's glance brought a smile to her face while my impertinent lorgnette made her very angry. Indeed, how dare a Caucasian armyman level an eye-glass at a princess from Moscow?

May 13

The doctor dropped in to see me this morning. His name is Werner, but he is a Russian. There is nothing surprising in that. I once knew an Ivanov who was a German.

Werner is in many respects a remarkable man. He is a sceptic and a materialist like most medical men, but he is also a poet, and that quite in earnest—a poet in all his deeds and frequently in words, though he never wrote two verses in his life. He has studied the vital chords of the human heart the way men study the sinews of a corpse, but he has never been able to make use of his knowledge just as a splendid anatomist may not be able to cure a fever. As a rule, Werner secretly laughed at his patients, yet once I saw him weep over a dying soldier. He was poor and dreamed of possessing millions, but he would not have gone a step out of his way for the sake of money. Once he told me that he would rather do an enemy a good turn than a friend, because in the latter case it would amount to profiting by one's charity, whereas hatred grows in proportion to the generosity of the adversary. He had a malicious tongue, and, branded by his epigrams, more than one good soul came to be regarded as a vulgar fool. His competitors, envious practitioners at the spa, spread a rumour that he drew caricatures of his patients; the latter were furious and he lost practically all his clientele. His friends, that is, all the really decent people serving in the Caucasus, tried in vain to repair his fallen prestige.

His appearance was of the kind that strikes one disagreeably at first sight but subsequently becomes likeable when the eye has learned to discern behind the irregular features the impress of a soul that is tried and lofty. There have been cases when women have fallen madly in love with men like him and would not have exchanged their ugliness for the beauty of the freshest and pinkest of Endymions. Women must be given credit for possessing an instinct for spiritual beauty; perhaps that is why men like Werner love women so passionately.

Werner was short of stature, thin and as frail as a child. Like Byron, he had one leg shorter than the other; his head was disproportionately large; he wore his hair cropped close, and the irregularities of his skull thus exposed would have astounded a phrenologist by their queer combination of contradictory inclinations. His small, black, ever restless eyes probed your thoughts. He dressed immaculately and with good taste, and his lean, small, sinewy hands were neatly gloved in pale yellow. His coat, cravat and waistcoat were invariably black. The young set called him Mephistopheles, and though he pretended to be displeased by the appellation, in reality it flattered his vanity. We soon understood each other and became companions—for I am incapable of friendship. Between two friends one is always the slave of the other, though frequently neither will admit it; the slave I cannot be, and to dominate is an arduous task since one must employ deception as well; besides, I have the servants and the money! This is how we became acquainted: I met Werner in S., in a large and boisterous gathering of the younger set. Toward the end of the evening the conversation took a philosophical and metaphysical trend. We spoke about convictions, of which each had his own.

"As for me, I am convinced of only one thing . . ." said the doctor.

"And what is that?" I asked, wishing to hear the opinion of a man who had been silent till then.

"That some fine morning sooner or later I shall die," he replied.

"I am better off than you," said I. "I have another conviction besides, which is that one exceedingly foul night I had the misfortune to be born."

Everyone else was of the opinion that we were talking nonsense, but really nobody had anything more clever to say. From that moment we singled each other out from among the crowd. We used to meet frequently and discuss abstract matters in all seriousness until we both noticed that we were pulling each other's leg. Then, after looking each other in the eye significantly—the way Cicero tells us the Roman augurs did—we would burst out laughing and separate satisfied with an evening well spent.

I was lying on a divan, my eyes fixed upon the ceiling and my hands behind my head, when Werner walked into my room. He seated himself in a chair, stood his cane in a corner, yawned and observed that it was getting hot outdoors. I replied that the flies were bothering me, and we both fell silent.

"You will have noticed, my dear doctor," said I, "that without fools the world would be very boring.... Now here we are, two intelligent people; we know in advance that everything can be argued about endlessly, and hence do not argue; we know nearly all of each other's innermost thoughts; a single word tells us a whole story, and we see the kernel of each of our sentiments through a triple husk. Sad things strike us as funny, funny things as sad, and generally speaking if you want to know, we are rather indifferent to everything except ourselves. Hence there can be no exchange of emotions and ideas between us; we know all we want to know about each other and do not wish to know more. That leaves only one thing to talk about: the latest news. Haven't you any news to tell me?"

Fatigued by the long speech, I closed my eyes and yawned.

"There is one idea in the balderdash you are talking," he replied after a pause for thought.

"Two!" I replied.

"Tell me one of them and I will say what the other is."

"Good. You begin," said I, continuing to inspect the ceiling and smiling inwardly.

"You would like to know some details about someone who has arrived at the spa, and I can guess who it is you have in mind because that person has already been inquiring about you."

"Doctor! We definitely need not converse; we can read each other's minds."

"Now the other one...."

"The second idea is this: I would like to induce you to tell me something; firstly, because listening is less tiring than talking, secondly, because in listening one does not give anything away, thirdly, because you may

learn another man's secret, and, fourthly, because clever people like you prefer a listener to a talker. Now let's come to the point: what did Princess Ligovskaya have to say to you about me?"

"Are you sure it was not Princess Mary?"

"Quite certain."

"Why?"

"Because Princess Mary asked about Grushnitsky."

"You have rare sagacity. The young Princess said she was certain the young man in the ordinary soldier's greatcoat had been degraded to the ranks on account of a duel...."

"I hope you did not disabuse her mind of that pleasant illusion...."

"Naturally not."

"The plot thickens," I cried in elation, "and we shall see to the denouement of the comedy. Fate apparently does not wish me to be bored."

"I have a notion that poor Grushnitsky will end up as your victim," said the doctor.

"And then what happened, doctor?"

"Princess Ligovskaya said your face was familiar. I observed she must have met you somewhere in St. Petersburg society, and mentioned your name. She knew about you. It seems that your story made a sensation there. Then the Princess went on to recount your adventures, probably spicing the society gossip with her own opinions. Her daughter listened with interest, visualizing you as the hero of a novel written in the modern style. I did not contradict the Princess though I knew she was talking nonsense."

"Worthy friend!" said I, extending my hand to him. The doctor gripped it with feeling and continued.

"If you wish me to, I'll introduce you...."

"My dear fellow!" said I, spreading my hands. "Have you ever heard of heroes being formally presented? They make the acquaintance of their beloved by rescuing her from certain death...."

"Do you really intend to court the Princess?"

"Not at all, quite the contrary! Doctor, I score at last, for you do not understand me! Yet it is rather annoying just the same," I continued after a moment's silence. "I make it a rule never to disclose my own thoughts, and am very glad when others divine them because that leaves me a loophole for denying them when necessary. But you must describe mama and daughter to me. What sort of people are they?"

"In the first place, the old Princess is a woman of forty-five," replied Werner. "Her digestion is splendid, though her blood is not quite in order; you can tell by the red spots on her cheeks. The latter half of her life she has spent in Moscow where inactivity has caused her to put on weight. She is fond of spicy anecdotes and says improper things when her daughter is out of the room. She told me that her daughter was as innocent as a dove. Though what it had to do with me, I don't know. I wanted to tell her that she might rest assured I would tell no one about it! The Princess is taking the cure for rheumatism, and the daughter the Lord knows what for; I told them both to drink two glasses of sulphur water daily and bathe twice weekly in it. The Princess apparently is unaccustomed to ordering people about, and she respects the brains and knowledge of her daughter, who has read Byron in English and knows algebra, for it seems that the young ladies of Moscow have taken up learning—good for them, I should say. In general our men are so ill-mannered that intelligent women probably find it unbearable to flirt with them. The old Princess is very fond of young men, but Princess Mary regards them with a certain contempt—an old Moscow habit. In Moscow they go in for forty-year-old wits only."

"Were you ever in Moscow, doctor?"

"Yes, I was. Had a sort of practice there."

"Please go on."

"I believe I have said everything there is to say.... Oh yes, one more thing: Princess Mary appears to be fond of discussing sentiments, emotions and the like. She spent a winter in Petersburg, but the city, and particularly its society, did not please her. Evidently she was given a cool reception."

"You didn't meet anybody else at their place today, did you?"

"Yes, I did. There was an adjutant, a starched guardsman, and a lady, one of the new arrivals, some relative of the Princess' husband, a very pretty woman but a very sick one, I believe. You didn't happen to see her at the spring? She is of medium height, blonde, with regular features, a consumptive complexion, and a little dark mole on her right cheek. I was struck by the expressiveness of her face."

"A mole?" I muttered. "Is it possible?"

The doctor looked at me and laying his hand on my heart said solemnly: "You know her." My heart indeed was beating faster than usual.

"It's your turn to exult now," said I. "Only I trust that you will not give me away. I have not seen her yet, but I believe I recognize in the portrait you have painted a woman I loved in the old days. . . . Don't tell her a word about me, and if she asks you, speak ill of me."

"As you wish," said Werner, shrugging his shoulders.

When he left, a terrible sadness flooded my soul. Was it fate that brought us together in the Caucasus, or had she come on purpose, knowing she would find me here? What would the meeting be like? And was it she, after all? My presentiments had never deceived me. There is not another person on earth over whom the past holds such sway as over me. Every remembrance of a past sorrow or joy sends a pang through my heart and invariably strikes the very same chords. I am stupidly constituted, for I forget nothing—nothing!

After dinner I went down to the boulevard at about six and found a crowd there. The Princess and her daughter were seated on a bench surrounded by a flock of young men who were paying them constant attention. I found myself another bench some distance away, stopped two officers I knew and began telling them a story. Apparently it amused them, because they roared with laughter like madmen. Curiosity drew to my bench some of the gallants who had clustered around the Princess; then little by little the rest too deserted her and joined my group. I talked incessantly, telling anecdotes that were witty to the point of stupidity and ridiculing the queer

characters that passed by with a malice bordering on viciousness. Thus I continued to amuse my audience until sunset. Several times the young Princess strolled arm-in-arm with her mother past me, accompanied by a limping old man, and several times her gaze rested on me, expressing vexation while trying to convey indifference.

"What was he telling you?" she asked one of the young men who returned to her out of sheer politeness. "It must have been a very thrilling story—about his battle exploits no doubt." She spoke rather loudly, obviously with the intention of slighting me. "Aha," thought I, "you are thoroughly annoyed, my dear Princess! Wait, there is more to come!"

Grushnitsky has been stalking her like a wild beast, never letting her out of his sight. I daresay that tomorrow he will ask someone to present him to Princess Ligovskaya. She will be very glad to meet him, for she is bored.

May 16

During the past two days things have been moving fast. Princess Mary decidedly hates me. I have already been told two or three rather biting but nevertheless very flattering epigrams pointed at me. It strikes her as very odd that I who am so accustomed to good society and on such intimate terms with her Petersburg cousins and aunts should make no effort to make her acquaintance. We see each other every day at the spring and on the boulevard, and I do my best to decoy her admirers, the glittering adjutants, pallid Moscovites and others—with almost invariable success. I have always loathed entertaining guests, but now I have a full house every day, for dinner, supper and a game of cards, and lo, my champagne triumphs over the magnetism of her eyes!

Yesterday I met her at Chelakhov's shop where she was bargaining for a splendid Persian rug. The Princess pleaded with her mother not to begrudge the money, for the rug would look so well in her room. . . . I overbid forty rubles and walked away with the rug, and was rewarded with a look

of the most bewitching fury. At dinner-time I deliberately had my Cherkess horse led past her windows with the rug thrown over its back. Werner who was visiting them at the time told me that the effect of the spectacle was most dramatic. The Princess wants to raise a levy against me; I have already noticed that in her presence two of the adjutants give me very curt nods, though they dine with me every day.

Grushnitsky has assumed a mysterious air; he walks with his hands behind his back oblivious of everybody. His leg has suddenly healed so that he scarcely limps. He found an occasion to engage the old Princess in conversation and to pay a compliment to Princess Mary; the latter apparently is not too discriminating, for ever since she has been responding to his bows with the most charming smile.

"You are sure you do not wish to meet the Ligovskys?" he asked me yesterday.

"Positive."

"Really! It's the pleasantest house at the spa. All the best local society...."

"My dear friend, I'm frightfully fed up with non-local society, let alone the local. Have you been calling on them?"

"Not yet. I have no more than talked with the Princess once or twice. You know how unpleasant it is to fish for an invitation, though it is done here.... It would be another matter if I had epaulettes...."

"My dear fellow! You are far more interesting as you are. You simply do not know how to take advantage of your favourable position. Don't you know that a soldier's greatcoat makes you a hero and a martyr in the eyes of any sensitive young lady?"

Grushnitsky smiled complacently.

"What nonsense!" he said.

"I am sure," I went on, "that the Princess has fallen in love with you."

He blushed to the roots of his hair and pouted.

O vanity! Thou art the lever with which Archimedes hoped to raise the globe.

"You're always joking," he said, pretending to be angry. "In the first place she barely knows me...."

"Women love only the men they don't know."

"But I have no particular desire to please her. I merely wish to make the acquaintance of a pleasant household, and it would indeed be absurd to entertain any hopes whatsoever.... Now you Petersburg lady-killers are another matter: you only have to look once for a woman to melt.... By the way, Pechorin, do you know the young Princess spoke of you?"

"What? Has she already spoken to you about me?"

"You have no reason to rejoice, though. Once quite by chance I entered into conversation with her at the spring; her third remark was, 'Who is that gentleman with the unpleasant, heavy-eyed expression? He was with you when....' She blushed and was reluctant to mention the day, recalling her charming little exploit. 'You need not mention the day,' I replied, 'for I shall always remember it....' Pechorin, my friend, I cannot congratulate you, for she thinks ill of you.... It is a pity, really, because Mary is very charming!"

It must be noted that Grushnitsky is one of those who in speaking of a woman they hardly know call her *my Mary* or *my Sophie* if only she has the good fortune to attract them.

Assuming a serious mien I replied:

"Yes, she is rather good-looking.... Only take care, Grushnitsky! Russian young ladies for the most part go in only for Platonic love with no intentions of matrimony, and Platonic love is most disturbing. It seems to me that the Princess is one of those women who wish to be amused; if she is bored for two minutes in your company you are irrevocably doomed. Your silence must arouse her curiosity, your conversation must never completely satisfy her; you must keep her in a state of suspense all the time; ten times she will defy public opinion for your sake and call it a sacrifice, and as a recompense she will begin to torment you and end up by saying simply that she cannot tolerate you. If you do not gain the

ascendancy over her, even her first kiss will not give you the right to a second. She will flirt with you to her heart's content and a year or two later marry an ugly beast in obedience to her mother's will; then she will begin to assure you that she is unhappy, that she had loved only one man—that is, you—but that fate had not ordained that she be joined to him because he wore a soldier's greatcoat, though beneath that thick grey garment there beat an ardent and noble heart. . . ."

Grushnitsky smote the table with his fist and began to pace up and down the room.

I shook with laughter inwardly and even smiled a couple of times, but luckily he did not notice it. He is clearly in love, for he has become more credulous than ever: he even wears a new niello-silver ring of local workmanship, which struck me as suspicious. On closer inspection what do you think I saw? The name *Mary* engraved in small letters on the inside and next to it the date when she picked up that famous tumbler. I said nothing of my discovery; I do not want to extract any confessions from him; I want him to make me his confidant by his own choice—and that's when I am going to enjoy myself. . . .

. . . . . .

Today I got up late, and by the time I reached the spring no one was there. It was getting hot, white fluffy clouds raced across the sky away from the snow-capped mountains promising a thunderstorm. Mashuk's summit was smoking like an extinguished torch, and around it grey tatters of clouds arrested in their flight and seemingly caught in the mountain brambles, writhed and crawled like serpents. The atmosphere was charged with electricity. I took the vine-flanked avenue leading to the grotto; I felt depressed. I was thinking of the young woman with the mole on her cheek whom the doctor had mentioned. What was she doing here? And was it she? And why did I think it was she? Why was I so certain about it? Are there so few women with moles on their cheeks? Ruminating thus I reached the grotto. A woman was seated on a stone bench in the cool shade of its

roof; she was wearing a straw hat, a black shawl was wrapped round her shoulders, and her head was lowered so that the hat concealed her face. I was about to turn back so as not to disturb her meditations when she looked up at me.

"Vera!" I cried out involuntarily.

She started and turned pale. "I know you were here," she said. I sat down next to her and took her hand. A long-forgotten tremor shot through my veins at the sound of that sweet voice. Her deep, tranquil eyes looked straight into mine; in them I could read distress and something akin to a reproach.

"We have not seen each other for so long," said I.

"Yes, and we both have changed a great deal."

"You mean, you do not love me any more!"

"I am married!" she said.

"Again? Some years ago there was the same reason, but in spite of that. . . ."

She snatched her hand away and her cheeks flamed.

"Perhaps you are in love with your second husband?"

She made no reply and turned away.

"Or maybe he is very jealous?"

Silence.

"Well, he must be a fine, handsome fellow, very rich, I suppose, and you are afraid that. . . ." I looked at her and was startled; her face expressed dire distress, and tears glistened in her eyes.

"Tell me," she whispered at last, "does it give you so much pleasure to torment me? I ought to hate you. Ever since we have known each other you have brought me nothing but pain. . . ." Her voice shook, and she leaned towards me resting her head on my breast.

"Perhaps," I thought, "that is why you loved me, for joy is forgotten, but sorrow never. . . ."

I pressed her close to me and we remained thus for a long time. Then our lips met and merged in a burning, rapturous kiss; her hands

were ice-cold, her head feverishly hot. There began one of those conversations that make no sense on paper, that cannot be repeated or even remembered, for the import of words is substituted and enriched by that of sounds, just as in Italian opera.

She is resolved that I should not meet her husband, who is the lame old man I caught a glimpse of on the boulevard. She married him for the sake of her son. He is rich and suffers from rheumatism. I did not allow myself a single disparaging remark about him, for she respects him like a father—and will deceive him as a husband.... A queer thing, the human heart, and a woman's heart in particular!

Vera's husband, Semyon Vasilyevich G...v, is a distant relative of Princess Ligovskaya. They are next door neighbours, and Vera is often at the Princess'. I promised her that I would meet the Ligovskys and dangle after Princess Mary so as to divert attention from her. This does not interfere with my plans at all and I will have a good time....

A good time! Yes, I have already passed that period of spiritual life when people seek happiness alone and when the heart must needs love someone passionately; now I only want to be loved, and then only by very few. As a matter of fact, I believe one constant attachment would suffice for me—a wretched sentimental habit!

It has always struck me as queer that I had never become the slave of the woman I loved; on the contrary, I have always acquired an invincible sway over their mind and heart without any effort on my part. Why is that? Was it because I have never particularly prized anything and they have been afraid to let me slip out of their hands for a moment? Or was it the magnetic appeal of physical strength? Or simply because I have never met a woman with strength of character?

I must admit that I do not care for women with a mind of their own—it does not suit them!

Though I recall now that once, but only once, I loved a woman with a strong mind I never could conquer.... We parted enemies, yet had I met her five years later the parting might have been quite different....

Vera is ill, very ill, although she will not admit it; I am afraid she has consumption or the disease they call *fiévre lente*—not a Russian ailment at all and hence it has no name in our language.

The thunderstorm overtook us in the grotto and kept us there another half an hour. She did not make me vow to be faithful to her, nor did she ask me whether I had loved others since we parted.... She trusted me again as wholeheartedly as before—and I shall not deceive her; she is the only woman in the world I would not have the heart to deceive. I know that we shall part again soon, perhaps forever. We shall both go our different ways to the grave, but I shall always cherish her memory. I have always told her so and she believes me, though she says she does not.

At length we parted, and I stood there following her with my eyes until her bonnet disappeared behind the bushes and rocks. My heart contracted painfully, just as when we parted the first time. Oh, how I revelled in this feeling! Was it youth with its beneficent tempests reasserting itself, or merely its farewell glance, a parting gift—a souvenir? And to think that I still look like a boy; though my face is pale, it is still fresh, my limbs are supple and graceful, my locks thick and curly, eyes flashing, and my blood courses swiftly through the veins....

On coming home, I mounted my horse and galloped into the steppe, for I love riding a mettlesome horse through the tall grass, with the desert wind in my face, greedily drinking in the fragrant air and gazing into the blue distance to discern hazy outlines of objects that grow more distinct every moment. Whatever sorrow weighs down the heart or anxiety plagues the mind, it all is immediately dispersed, and a peace settles over the soul as physical fatigue prevails over mental unrest. There are no feminine eyes I would not forget when gazing on the wooded mountains bathed in the southern sunshine, contemplating the blue sky, or listening to the roar of the torrent falling from crag to crag.

I should imagine the Cossack sentinels, standing drowsily in their watchtowers, must have been sorely puzzled on seeing me galloping along

without aim or drift, for they most likely took me for a Cherkess on account of my costume. As a matter of fact I had been told that mounted and wearing Cherkess costume I look more like a Kabardian than many Kabardians. And indeed, as far as this noble battle garb is concerned I am a perfect dandy: not an extra bit of braiding, costly weapons in the simplest setting, the fur on my cap neither too long nor too short, leggings and soft-leather boots fitting perfectly, white *beshmet* and dark-brown Cherkess coat. I practised long the mountaineers' way of sitting a horse; and nothing so flatters my vanity as praise for my ability to ride a horse as the Caucasians do. I keep four horses, one for myself and three for my friends, so as to avoid the boredom of riding out alone through the fields, but though they are pleased to have my horses to ride they never ride with me. It was already six o'clock in the afternoon when I remembered that it was time for dinner; moreover, my horse was exhausted. I rode out onto the road leading from Pyatigorsk to the German colony where the spa society frequently goes *en piquenique*. The road winds its way through the shrubbery, dipping into shallow gullies where noisy rivulets flow in the shadow of the tall grasses; all around are the towering blue terraces of Beshtau, Zmeinaya, Zheleznaya and Lysaya mountains. I had stopped in one of these gullies to water my horse when a noisy and brilliant cavalcade appeared down the road; there were ladies in black and sky-blue riding habits and gentlemen in garb that was a mixture of Cherkess and Nizhni-Novgorod. Grushnitsky and Princess Mary rode in front.

Ladies who come to take the waters still believe the stories of Cherkess raids in broad daylight, and that probably explains why Grushnitsky had belted a sabre and a pair of pistols over his soldier's greatcoat; he looked rather ridiculous in these heroic vestments. A tall bush concealed me from them, but I had a perfect view through the foliage and could tell by the expression of their faces that the conversation was in a sentimental vein. Finally they neared the dip in the road. Grushnitsky gripped the reins of the Princess' horse, and now I could hear the end of their conversation:

"And you wish to remain in the Caucasus all your life?" said the Princess.

"What is Russia to me?" replied her escort. "A country where thousands of people will despise me because they are wealthier than I, whereas here—why, here this thick greatcoat was no obstacle to my making your acquaintance. . . ."

"On the contrary . . ." said the Princess, blushing.

Grushnitsky looked pleased. He continued:

"Here my days will flow thick and fast and unnoticed under the bullets of barbarians, and if only God should send me each year one bright feminine glance, one like. . . ."

By this time they drew level with me; I struck my horse with the whip and rode out from behind the bushes.

"*Mon dieu, un Circassien!*" cried the Princess in terror.

To reassure her I replied in French, with a slight bow:

"*Ne craignez rien, madame, je ne suis pas plus dangereux que votre cavalier.*"

She was thrown into confusion—I wonder why? Because of her mistake, or because she thought my reply insolent? I wish indeed that the latter were the case. Grushnitsky glanced at me with displeasure.

Late that night, that is, about eleven o'clock, I went for a walk along the lime avenue of the boulevard. The town was fast asleep, and only here and there a light shone in a window. On three sides loomed the black ridges of the spurs of Mashuk, on whose summit lay an ominous cloud; the moon was rising in the east; in the distance the snow-capped summits glistened in a silvery fringe. The cries of sentries intermingled with the noise of the hot springs now released for the night. At times the ringing hoofbeats echoed down the street accompanied by the creaking of a covered ox-waggon and the plaintive chant of a Tatar refrain. I sat down on a bench and sank into thought. I felt a need to unburden my thoughts in a friendly talk . . . but with whom? What was Vera doing now, I wondered. I would have given much to press her hand just then.

Suddenly I heard quick, uneven steps.... Probably Grushnitsky... and so it was.

"Where have you been?"

"At Princess Ligovskaya's," he said gravely. "How beautifully Mary sings!"

"You know what," said I, "I'll wager she does not know you are a cadet, but thinks you are a degraded officer."

"Maybe. What do I care!" he said absently.

"Well, I just mentioned it...."

"Do you know that you made her terribly angry? She thought it was downright insolence on your part. I had a stiff job trying to assure her that you are so well bred and so much at home in society that you could not have had any intention of insulting her. She says you have an impudent look and must be very conceited."

"She is right.... You seem to be taking her part, don't you?"

"I'm sorry I haven't won that right yet."

"Oho!" thought I. "Evidently he already has hopes...."

"It'll only be worse for you," Grushnitsky went on. "Now it will be hard for you to meet them—what a pity! It is one of the pleasantest houses I know...."

I smiled inwardly.

"The pleasantest house for me just now is my own," said I yawning, and rose to go.

"Still you must admit that you regret it?"

"What nonsense! I could be at the Princess' tomorrow night if I wish...."

"We'll see about that...."

"To please you I can even pay court to the Princess...."

"That is, if she is willing to talk to you...."

"I shall wait till she gets bored with your conversation.... Good night!"

"And I'll go for a prowl—couldn't fall asleep for anything now.... Look here, let's go to the restaurant, one can gamble there.... Violent sensations are what I need tonight."

"I hope you lose...."

I went home.

May 21

Nearly a week has passed and I have not met the Ligovskys yet. Am waiting for an opportunity. Grushnitsky follows Princess Mary about like a shadow, and they talk incessantly. I wonder when she'll get tired of him. Her mother takes no notice of what is going on because he is *not eligible*. There is the logic of mothers for you! I have caught two or three tender looks—this must be put a stop to.

Yesterday Vera made her first appearance at the spring. Since our meeting in the grotto she has not left the house. We dipped our tumblers into the water at the same time and as she bent down she whispered to me:

"You don't want to go to the Ligovskys'! It is the only place where we can meet."

A reproach—how boring! But I deserved it.

By the way, there is a subscription ball at the restaurant hall, and I intend to dance the mazurka with Princess Mary.

May 29

The restaurant hall was transformed into a Nobles' Club hall. By nine o'clock everybody was there. Princess Ligovskaya and her daughter were among the last to arrive. Many of the ladies eyed Princess Mary with envy and ill will, for she dresses with very good taste. Those who consider themselves the local aristocrats concealed their envy and attached themselves to her. What else could be expected? Wherever there is feminine society, there is an immediate division into the upper and lower circles. Grushnitsky stood among the crowd outside the window, pressing his face

to the glass and devouring his goddess with his eyes; in passing she gave him a barely perceptible nod. He beamed like the sun.... The first dance was a polonaise; then the orchestra struck up a waltz. Spurs jingled and coat-tails whirled.

I stood behind a stout lady under a rose-coloured plumage. The splendour of her gown was reminiscent of the farthingale age and the blotchiness of her coarse skin of the happy epoch of the black-taffeta beauty spots. The biggest wart on her neck was concealed beneath a clasp. She was saying to her partner, a captain of dragoons:

"This Princess Ligovskaya is a minx. Think of it, she bumped into me and did not bother to apologize, and actually turned round to look at me through her lorgnette.... *C'est impayable!* And what has she got to give herself airs for? It would do her good to be taught a lesson...."

"Leave it to me!" replied the obliging captain and repaired to another room.

I went over at once to the Princess and asked for the waltz, taking advantage of the freedom of the local customs which allow one to dance with strangers.

She was scarcely able to suppress a smile and thus conceal her triumph, but quickly enough she managed to assume a totally indifferent and even severe mien. She carelessly laid her hand on my shoulder, tilted her head a bit to one side, and off we started. I know no other waist so voluptuous and supple. Her sweet breath caressed my face; now and then a ringlet broke loose from its companions in the whirl of the dance and brushed my burning cheek.... I made three turns round the room. (She waltzes delightfully.) She was panting, her eyes looked blurred and her parted lips could hardly whisper the necessary *"Merci, monsieur."*

After a few minutes of silence I said, assuming the humblest of expressions:

"I have heard, Princess, that while still an utter stranger to you, I had the misfortune to evoke your displeasure, that you found me impertinent.... Is that really true?"

"And you would like to strengthen that opinion now?" she replied, with an ironical little grimace that, incidentally, matched well the quick mobility of her features.

"If I had the audacity to offend you in any way, will you allow me the greater audacity of asking your forgiveness? Really, I should like very much to prove that you were mistaken in your opinion of me. . . ."

"That will be a rather difficult task for you. . . ."

"Why?"

"Because you don't come to our house and these balls probably will not be repeated frequently."

That means, thought I, their doors are closed to me for all time.

"Do you know, Princess," said I with a shade of annoyance, "that one should never spurn a repentant sinner, for out of sheer desperation he may become doubly sinful . . . and then. . . ."

Laughter and whispering around us made me break off and look round. A few paces away stood a group of men, among them the captain of dragoons who had expressed his hostile intentions toward the charming Princess. He seemed to be highly pleased with something, rubbing his hands, laughing loudly and exchanging winks with his comrades. Suddenly a gentleman in a tailcoat and with a long moustache and a red face stepped out of their midst and walked unsteadily toward the Princess. He was obviously drunk. Stopping in front of the bewildered Princess, with his hands behind his back, he directed his bleary grey eyes at her and said in a wheezy treble:

"*Permettez* . . . oh, dash it . . . I just want to have the mazurka. . . ."

"What do you want, sir?" she said with a tremor in her voice, casting about a beseeching glance. But, alas, her mother was far away, nor were there any of the gallants she knew nearby, excepting one adjutant who, I believe, saw what was going on, but hid behind the crowd to avoid being involved in an unpleasant scene.

"Well, well!" said the drunken gentleman, winking at the captain of dragoons who was spurring him on with encouraging signs. "You would

rather not? I once more have the honour of inviting you *pour mazure*.... Maybe you think I'm drunk? That's all right! Dance all the better, I assure you...."

I saw she was on the verge of fainting from terror and mortification.

I stepped up to the intoxicated gentleman, gripped him firmly by the arm and looking him straight in the eyes asked him to go away, because, I added, the Princess had already promised me the mazurka.

"Oh, I see! Another time, then!" he said, with a laugh, and rejoined his cronies who, looking rather crestfallen, guided him out of the room.

I was rewarded with a charming glance.

The Princess went over to her mother and told her what had happened, and the latter sought me out in the crowd to thank me. She told me that she knew my mother and was a friend of a half a dozen of my aunts.

"I simply cannot understand how it is we haven't met before," she added, "though you must admit that it's your own fault. You hold yourself so aloof you know, really. I hope the atmosphere of my drawing-room will dispel your spleen. What do you say?"

I replied with one of those polite phrases everyone must have in store for occasions like this.

The quadrilles dragged out interminably.

Finally the mazurka started and I sat down beside the young Princess.

I made no reference to the drunken gentleman, nor to my previous conduct, nor yet to Grushnitsky. The impression the unpleasant incident had made on her gradually dispersed, her face glowed, and she chatted charmingly. Her conversation was pointed without pretensions to wit, it was vivacious and free of restraint, and some of her observations were profound indeed.... I let her understand in a confused, rambling sort of way that I had long been attracted by her. She bent her head and blushed faintly.

"You are a strange man!" she said presently with a constrained smile, raising her velvety eyes to me.

"I did not wish to meet you," I continued, "because you are surrounded by too great a crowd of admirers and I was afraid it might engulf me completely."

"You had nothing to fear. They are all exceedingly tiresome. . . ."

"All of them? Certainly not all?"

She looked at me closely as if trying to recall something, then blushed faintly again and finally said in a decided tone: "All of them!"

"Even my friend Grushnitsky?"

"Is he your friend?" she asked dubiously.

"He is."

"He, certainly, cannot be classed as a bore."

"But an unfortunate, perhaps?" said I, laughingly.

"Of course! Why are you amused? I would like to see you in his place."

"Why? I was a cadet once myself, and believe me, that was the finest period of my life!"

"Is he a cadet?" she asked quickly, adding a moment later: "And I thought. . . ."

"What did you think?"

"Nothing, nothing at all. . . . Who is that lady?"

The conversation took a different turn and this subject was not resumed.

The mazurka ended and we parted—until we should meet again. The ladies went home. Going in for supper, I met Werner.

"Aha," he said, "so that's that! And you said you would only make the Princess' acquaintance by rescuing her from certain death?"

"I did better," I replied, "I saved her from fainting at the ball!"

"What happened? Tell me!"

"No, you will have to guess, O you who divine everything under the sun!"

May 30

I was walking on the boulevard about seven o'clock in the evening. Grushnitsky, seeing me from afar, came over, a ridiculously rapturous light gleaming in his eys. He clasped my hand tightly and said in a tragic tone:

"I thank you, Pechorin.... You understand me, don't you?"

"No, I don't. In any case there is nothing to thank me for," I replied, for I really had no good deed on my conscience.

"Why, what about yesterday? Have you forgotten? Mary told me everything...."

"You don't say you already share everything in common? And gratitude too?"

"Listen," said Grushnitsky with an impressive air. "Please don't make fun of my love if you wish to remain my friend.... You see, I love her madly ... and I believe, I hope, that she loves me too.... I have a favour to ask of you: you will be visiting them this evening, promise me to observe everything. I know you are experienced in these matters and you know women better than I do. O women, women! Who really does understand them? Their smiles disavow their glances, their words promise and beguile, but the tone of their voice repulses.They either divine in a flash your innermost thought or they do not grasp the most obvious hint.... Take the Princess, for instance: yesterday her eyes glowed with passion when they dwelt on me but now they are lustreless and cold...."

"That perhaps is the effect of the waters," replied I.

"You always look at the seamy side of things ... you materialist!" he added scornfully. "But let us get down to other matters." Pleased with this bad pun, his spirits rose.

At nine o'clock we went together to the Princess'.

In passing Vera's windows I saw her looking out, and we exchanged a cursory glance. She entered the Ligovskys' drawing-room soon after us. The old Princess introduced her to me as a kinswoman. Tea was served,

there were many guests, and the conversation was general. I did my best to charm the old Princess, told jokes and made her laugh heartily several times; her daughter too wanted to laugh more than once, but she suppressed the desire so as not to abandon the role she assumed, for she believes that langour is becoming to her—and perhaps she is right. I believe Grushnitsky was very glad that my gaiety did not infect her.

After tea we all repaired to the sitting-room.

"Are you pleased with my obedience, Vera?" I asked as I passed her.

She gave me a look full of love and gratitude. I am used to these glances; but there was a time when they were my heart's delight. Princess Ligovskaya made her daughter sit down to the piano and everybody begged her to sing. I said nothing, and taking advantage of the hubbub withdrew to a window with Vera who intimated that she had something to say of great importance to both of us. It turned out to be nonsense.

My indifference did not please the young Princess, however, as I could guess by the one angry flashing glance she gave me.... How well do I understand this dumb but eloquent conversational means, so brief yet so forceful!

She sang: her voice is pleasant but she sings badly ... as a matter of fact, I did not listen. But Grushnitsky, with his elbows on the piano facing the Princess, devoured her with his eyes, mumbling "*Charmant! Délicieux!*" over and over again.

"Listen," Vera was saying, "I do not want you to make the acquaintance of my husband, but you must get into the old Princess' good graces; you can do it easily, you can do anything you wish. We shall meet only here...."

"Nowhere else?"

She coloured and went on:

"You know I am your slave, I never could resist you. And I will be punished for it. Because you will cease to love me! At least I want to save my reputation ... not because of myself, you know that very well. But please don't torment me as before with idle doubts and feigned indiffer-

ence; I may die soon, for I feel I am growing weaker day by day . . . but in spite of that I cannot think of the life beyond, I think only of you. You men do not understand the rapture one can find in a glance or a handclasp, but, I swear to you, the sound of your voice fills me with a deep, strange feeling of joy as no passionate kisses ever could do."

In the meantime Princess Mary had stopped singing. A chorus of praise broke out around her. I walked up to her last and said something very casual about her voice.

She pouted and made a mock curtsy.

"It is all the more flattering to me," she said, "because you weren't listening at all. But perhaps you do not care for music?"

"On the contrary, I do, particularly after dinner."

"Grushnitsky is right when he says that your tastes are most prosaic. Even I can see that you appreciate music from the point of view of the gourmand. . . ."

"You are wrong again. I am no gourmand and I have a poor digestion. Nevertheless, music after dinner lulls you to sleep and a nap after dinner is good for you; hence I like music in the medical sense. In the evening, on the contrary, it excites my nerves too much, and I find myself either too depressed or too gay. Both are tedious when there is no good reason either to mope or to rejoice; besides to be downcast in company is ridiculous and excessive gaiety is in bad taste. . . ."

She walked off without waiting for me to finish and sat down beside Grushnitsky. The two engaged in a sentimental conversation: the Princess seemed to respond to his sapient saying in an absent-minded, rather inept, way, though she simulated interest, and he glanced at her every now and then with a look of surprise as if trying to fathom the cause of the inner turmoil reflected in her troubled eyes.

But I have unravelled your secret, my charming Princess, so beware! You wish to repay me in the same currency by wounding my vanity—but you will not succeed in doing so! And if you declare war on me, I shall be ruthless.

Several times in the course of the evening I deliberately tried to join in their conversation, but she countered my remarks rather drily, and I finally withdrew feigning resentment. The Princess was triumphant, and so was Grushnitsky. Triumph, my friends, while you may ... you have not long to triumph! What will happen? I have a presentiment.... Upon meeting a woman I have always been able to tell without error whether she will fall in love with me or not....

The remainder of the evening I spent with Vera, and we talked our fill about the past. I really do not know why she loves me so. Especially since she is the only woman who has ever completely understood me with all my petty frailties and evil passions.... Can evil indeed be so attractive?

I left together with Grushnitsky. Outside he took my arm and after a long silence said:

"Well, what do you say?"

I wanted to tell him, "You are a fool," but restrained myself and merely shrugged my shoulders.

June 6

All these days I have not once departed from my system. The Princess is beginning to enjoy my conversation. I told her some of the curious incidents of my life, and she is beginning to regard me as an unusual person. I mock at everything under the sun, emotions in particular, and this is beginning to frighten her. She does not dare to launch upon sentimental debates with Grushnitsky when I am present, and already on several occasions she has replied to him with an ironical smile. Yet each time Grushnitsky approaches her I assume a humble air and leave the two alone. The first time I did so she was glad, or tried to look pleased; the second time she lost patience with me, and the third time with Grushnitsky.

"You have very little pride!" she told me yesterday. "Why do you think I prefer Grushnitsky's society?"

I replied that I was sacrificing my own pleasure for a friend's happiness.

"And my pleasure as well," she added.

I looked at her intently and assumed an air of gravity. Then for the rest of the day I did not address her.... She was pensive last night, and even more wistful this morning at the spring. As I walked up to her, she was listening absently to Grushnitsky who, I believe, was harping on the beauties of nature, but as soon as she saw me she began to laugh heartily (rather irrelevantly), pretending not to notice me. I withdrew some distance away and watched her out of the corner of my eye; she turned away from her companion and yawned twice. There is no doubt about it: she is bored with Grushnitsky. But I shall not speak to her for another two days.

June 11

I often ask myself why it is that I so persistently seek to win the love of a young girl whom I do not wish to seduce and whom I shall never marry. Why this feminine coquetry? Vera loves me better than Princess Mary ever will. Were she an unconquerable beauty, the difficulty of the undertaking might serve as an inducement....

But far from it! Hence this is not the restless craving for love that torments us in the early years of our youth and casts us from one woman to another until we meet one who cannot endure us; this is the beginning of our constancy—the true unending passion that may mathematically be represented by a line extending from a point into space, the secret of whose endlessness consists merely in the impossibility of attaining the goal, that is, the end.

What is it that spurs me on? Envy of Grushnitsky? Poor chap! He does not deserve it. Or is it the result of that malicious but indomitable impulse to annihilate the blissful illusions of a fellow man in order to have the petty satisfaction of telling him when in desperation he appeals to us:

"My friend, the same thing happened to me! Yet as you see, I dine, sup and sleep well, and, I hope, will be able to die without any fuss or tears!"

And yet to possess a young soul that has barely burgeoned out is a source of unfathomable delight. It is like a flower whose richest perfume goes out to meet the first ray of the sun; one must pluck it at that very moment and after inhaling its perfume to one's heart's content cast it away on the chance that someone will pick it up. I sense in myself that insatiable avidity that devours everything in its path; and I regard the sufferings and joys of others merely in relation to myself, as food to sustain my spiritual strength. Passions no longer are capable of robbing me of my sanity, my ambition has been crushed by circumstances, but it has manifested itself in new form, for ambition is nothing but greed for power, and my greatest pleasure I derive from subordinating everything around me to my will. Is it not both the first token of power and its supreme triumph to inspire in others the emotions of love, devotion and fear? Is it not the sweetest fare for our vanity to be the cause of pain or joy for someone without the least claim thereto? And what is happiness? Pride gratified. Could I consider myself better and more powerful than anyone else in the world, I should be happy; were everybody to love me, I should find in myself unending well-springs of love. Evil begets evil; the first pain leads to a realization of how great is the pleasure of tormenting another; the conception of evil cannot take root in the mind of man without his desiring to apply it in practice. Someone has said that ideas are organic entities: their very birth imparts them form, and this form is action. He in whose brain most ideas are born is more active than others, and because of this a genius shackled to an office desk must either die or lose his mind, just as a man of powerful physique who leads a sedentary and chaste life dies of apoplectic stroke.

Passions are nothing more than ideas at the first stage of their development; they belong to the heart's youth, and he is foolish who thinks they will stir him all his life. Many a placid river begins in roaring waterfalls, but not a single stream leaps and froths all the way to the sea. Frequently this placidity is a symptom of great though latent force. The fullness and depth of emotions and thought precludes furious impulses, for the

soul in its sufferings or rejoicings is fully alive to what is taking place and conscious that so it must be; it knows that were there no tempests the constant heat of the sun would shrivel it; it is imbued with its own life, fostering and chastising itself as a mother her favourite child. Only in this state of supreme self-cognition can a man appreciate the divine judgment.

Reading over this page I notice that I have digressed far from my subject. But what of it? For I am writing this journal for myself and hence anything I jot down will in time become a precious memory to me.

. . . . . .

Grushnitsky came and flung himself on my neck—he had received his commission. We had some champagne. Doctor Werner came in immediately after.

"I don't offer you my felicitations," he said to Grushnitsky.

"Why?"

"Because the soldier's greatcoat suits you very well and you will have to admit that an infantry officer's uniform tailored here at the spa will not add anything of interest to you. . . . You see, so far you have been an exception, whereas now you will be quite commonplace."

"Say what you will, doctor, you cannot prevent me from rejoicing. He does not know," Grushnitsky whispered in my ear, "what hopes I attach to these epaulettes. O epaulettes, epaulettes! Your stars are little guiding stars. . . . No! I am perfectly happy now."

"Are you coming with us for a walk to the chasm?" I asked him.

"Oh no! I wouldn't show myself to the Princess for anything until my new uniform is ready."

"Shall I tell her about your good fortune?"

"Please don't, I want it to be a surprise."

"Tell me though, how are you getting along with her?"

He was embarrassed and pondered a while. He would have liked to brag about it and lie, but his conscience forbade him, and at the same time he was ashamed to confess the truth.

"Do you think she loves you?"

"Does she love me? For goodness sake, Pechorin, what ideas you have! How can you expect it so soon? And even if she did, a respectable woman would not say so...."

"Good! You probably believe that a respectable man too must conceal his passion."

"Ah, my good fellow, there is a proper way to do everything. Many things are not said but guessed...."

"True enough.... Only the love we read in a woman's eyes is non-commital whereas words.... Take care, Grushnitsky, she is deceiving you...."

"She?" he replied, raising his eyes to the sky and smiling complacently. "I pity you, Pechorin!"

He left.

In the evening a large company set out on foot for the chasm.

The local savants are of the opinion that this chasm is nothing but an extinct crater. It is located on the slope of Mashuk within a verst of the town. It is approached by a narrow path winding through the brush and crags. As we climbed the mountainside I offered my arm to the Princess, who did not relinquish it throughout the entire walk.

Our conversation started with scandal; I began to go through our acquaintances both present and absent, first describing their ridiculous aspects, then their bad traits. My gall was up and after starting off in jest I finished in deadly earnest. At first she was amused, then alarmed.

"You are a dangerous man!" she told me. "I would rather risk a murderer's knife in the forest than be flayed by your tongue. I beg of you quite earnestly—if you should ever take it into your mind to speak ill of me, take a knife instead and kill me. I believe you would not find it too difficult to do."

"Do I look like a murderer?"

"You are worse...."

I thought for a moment and then said, assuming a deeply touched mien:

"Yes, such has been my lot since childhood. Everyone read signs of non-existent evil traits in my features. But since they were expected to be there, they did make their appearance. Because I was reserved, they said I was sly, so I grew reticent. I was keenly aware of good and evil, but instead of being fondled I was insulted and so I became spiteful. I was sulky while other children were merry and talkative, but though I felt superior to them I was considered inferior. So I grew envious. I was ready to love the whole world, but no one understood me, and I learned to hate. My cheerless youth passed in conflict with myself and society, and fearing ridicule I buried my finest feelings deep in my heart, and there they died. I spoke the truth, but nobody believed me, so I began to practice duplicity. Having come to know society and its mainsprings, I became versed in the art of living and saw how others were happy without that proficiency, enjoying gratuitously the boons I had so painfully striven for. It was then that despair was born in my breast—not the despair that is cured with a pistol, but a cold, impotent desperation concealed under a polite exterior and a good-natured smile. I became a moral cripple; I had lost one half of my soul, for it had shrivelled, dried up and died and I had cut it off and cast it away, while the other half stirred and lived, adapted to serve every comer. No one noticed this because no one suspected there had been another half; now, however, you awakened memories of it in me, and what I have just done is to read its epitaph to you. Many regard all epitaphs ridiculous, but I do not, particularly when I remember what rests beneath them. Of course, I am not asking you to share my opinion; if what I have said seems funny to you, please laugh, though I warn you that it will not annoy me in the slightest."

At that moment our eyes met, and I saw that hers swam with tears. Her arm resting on mine trembled, her cheeks were flaming. She was sorry for me! Compassion—that emotion which all women so easily yield to—had sunk its talons into her inexperienced heart. Throughout the walk she was absent-minded and flirted with no one—and that is a great omen indeed!

We reached the chasm. The other ladies left their escorts, but she did not release my arm. The witticisms of the local dandies did not amuse her;

the abruptness of the bluff on the brink of which she stood did not alarm her, though the other young ladies squealed and closed their eyes.

On the way back I did not resume the sad conversation, but to my idle questions and jests she gave only brief and distracted answers.

"Have you ever been in love?" I finally asked her.

She looked at me intently, shook her head and again was lost in thought. It was evident that she wanted to say something but did not know where to begin. Her breast heaved.... Indeed, a muslin sleeve affords but slight protection, and an electric tremor ran from my arm to hers; most passions begin thus, and we frequently deceive ourselves when we think that a woman loves us for our physical or moral qualities; true, they prepare the ground, dispose her heart to receive the sacred flame, but nevertheless it is the first contact that decides the issue.

"I have been very amiable today, have I not?" the Princess said with a forced smile when we returned from our walk.

We parted.

She is displeased with herself; she accuses herself of being cool. Ah, this is the first and most important triumph! Tomorrow she will want to reward me. I know it all by rote—and that is what makes it all so boring.

June 12

I have just seen Vera. She nagged me to death with jealousy. I believe the Princess has chosen to confide her secrets of the heart to Vera. An appropriate choice, indeed!

"I can guess what it all will lead to," Vera said to me. "It would be better if you told me frankly now that you love her."

"But supposing I do not love her?"

"Then why pursue her, disturb her and stir her imagination? Oh, I know you too well! If you want me to believe you, go to Kislovodsk a week from now. We shall move there the day after tomorrow. Princess Ligovskaya is remaining here a little longer. Rent the apartment next door

to ours; we shall stay in the large house near the fountain, on the mezzanine floor. Princess Ligovskaya will occupy the floor below, and next door there is another house belonging to the same owner which has not been taken yet.... Will you come?"

I promised, and the very same day sent a man to rent the apartments.

Grushnitsky dropped in at six in the evening and announced that his uniform would be ready the next day, just in time for the ball.

"At last I shall dance with her all evening.... And talk to my heart's content," he added.

"When is the ball?"

"Tomorrow. Didn't you know? It's quite a gala event, and the local authorities are sponsoring it."

"Let's go out on the boulevard."

"Goodness no, not in this hideous greatcoat...."

"What? Do you mean to say you don't like it any more?"

I went out alone, and, encountering Princess Mary asked her for the mazurka. She looked surprised and pleased.

"I thought you danced only when necessary, like the last time," she said, smiling very prettily.

She seemed to be totally unaware of Grushnitsky's absence.

"You will have a pleasant surprise tomorrow," I said to her.

"What is it?"

"It's a secret.... You will see for yourself at the ball."

I wound up the evening at Princess Ligovskaya's. There were no guests besides Vera and a very amusing old man. I was in good form and improvised all kinds of fantastic stories. Princess Mary sat opposite me listening to my chatter with an attention so great, intense and even tender that I felt a pang of remorse. What had become of her vivacity, her coquetry, her caprices, her haughty air, her contemptuous smile and absent gaze?

Vera noticed it all and a deep sadness was reflected on her wan face; she sat in the shadows at the window sunk in a broad arm-chair. I was sorry for her....

Then I related the whole dramatic story of our friendship and love, naturally using fictitious names.

So vividly did I describe my tender feelings, anxieties and raptures, and portrayed her actions and character in so favourable a light that she could not but forgive me my flirtation with the Princess.

She got up, moved to a seat closer to us and recovered her spirits ... and only at two o'clock in the morning did we recollect that physician's orders were to retire at eleven.

June 13

Half an hour before the ball Grushnitsky came to my apartment in the full splendour of an infantry officer's uniform. A bronze chain on which a double lorgnette dangled was attached to his third button; he wore epaulettes of incredible size which curled up like Cupid's wings; his boots squeaked; in his left hand he carried a pair of brown kid gloves and his cap, while with his right he kept twirling his frizzled forelock into tiny curls. Complacency tinged with a certain hesitancy was written on his face. His festive appearance and his proud carriage would have made me roar with laughter had that been in keeping with my intentions.

He threw his cap and gloves on the table and began to pull at his coat-tails and preen himself in front of the mirror. An enormous black kerchief twisted into a high stiffener for his cravat, with bristles that supported his chin, showed a half an inch above the collar; he thought that too little and pulled it up to his ears. The exertion made his face grow purple, for the collar of the uniform coat was very tight and uncomfortable.

"They say you have been hard after my Princess these days," he said rather nonchalantly, without looking at me.

"It's not for the likes of us to drink tea!" replied I, repeating a favourite saying by one of the cleverest rakes of the past once sung by Pushkin.

"Say, does this thing fit me well? Confound the Jew! It's tight under the armpits. Have you any perfume?"

"For goodness sake, what more do you want? You already reek of rose pomade."

"Never mind. Let's have some...."

He poured half a phial on his cravat, handkerchief and sleeves.

"Going to dance?" he asked.

"I don't think so."

"I am afraid the Princess and I will have to start the mazurka, and I scarcely know a single figure...."

"Did you ask her for the mazurka?"

"No, not yet...."

"Take care no one anticipates you...."

"You're right, by gad!" he said, slapping his forehead. "Good-bye, I'll go and wait for her at the entrance." He seized his cap and ran off.

Half an hour later I too set out. The streets were dark and deserted. Around the club rooms or inn—whichever you want to call it—the crowds were gathering. The windows were lighted up, and the evening wind wafted to me the strains of the regimental band. I walked slowly, steeped in melancholy. Can it be, thought I, that my sole mission on earth is to destroy the hopes of others? Ever since I began to live and act, fate has somehow associated me with the denouement of other people's tragedies, as if without me no one could either die or give way to despair! I have been the inevitable fifth-act character, involuntarily playing the detestable role of the hangman or the traitor. What has been fate's object in all this? Has it destined me to be the author of middle-class tragedies and family romances —or a purveyor of tales for, say, the Reader's Library?* Who knows? Are there not many who begin life by aspiring to end it like Alexander the Great, or Lord Byron, and yet remain petty civil servants all their lives?

On entering the hall I mingled with the crowd of men and began making observations. Grushnitsky was standing beside the Princess and talking with great ardour; she was listening to him absent-mindedly, looking around

* A popular monthly magazine published in St. Petersburg.

and pressing her fan to her lips; her countenance expressed impatience and her eyes searched for someone. I quietly slipped behind them so as to overhear the conversation.

"You are tormenting me, Princess," Grushnitsky said. "You have changed terribly since I saw you last."

"You too have changed," she replied, throwing him a swift look whose veiled scorn was lost on him.

"I? Changed? Never! You know that is impossible! Whoever has seen you once will carry your divine image with him to the grave...."

"Stop...."

"Why will you not listen now to what you so recently and so often lent a favourable ear?"

"Because I do not like repetition," she replied, laughing.

"O, I have been bitterly mistaken! I thought, fool that I am, that at least these epaulettes would give me the right to hope.... Yes, it would have been better to spend the rest of my life in that despicable greatcoat of a soldier to which I perhaps owe your attention."

"Really, the greatcoat becomes you far better...."

At that moment I came up and bowed to the Princess; she blushed slightly, saying hurriedly:

"Don't you think, M'sieu Pechorin, that the grey greatcoat suits M'sieu Grushnitsky much better?"

"I do not agree with you," replied I. "He looks even younger in this uniform."

Grushnitsky could not stand the thrust, for like all boys he lays claim to being a man of years. He thinks that the deep traces of passions on his face can pass for the stamp of years. He threw a furious look at me, stamped his foot and strode away.

"You must admit," said I to the Princess, "that although he has always been very ridiculous he still struck you as interesting a short while ago... in his grey greatcoat."

She dropped her eyes and said nothing.

Grushnitsky pursued the Princess the whole evening, dancing either with her or vis-à-vis; he devoured her with his eyes, sighed and wearied her with his supplications and reproaches. By the end of the third quadrille she already hated him.

"I did not expect this of you," he said, coming up to me and taking me by the arm.

"What are you talking about?"

"Are you going to dance the mazurka with her?" he asked me in a solemn tone. "She admitted as much to me. . . ."

"Well, what of it? Is it a secret?"

"Of course. . . . I should have expected it from that hussy, that flirt. . . . Never mind, I'll take my revenge!"

"Blame your greatcoat or your epaulettes, but why accuse her? Is it her fault that she no longer likes you?"

"Why did she give me reason to hope?"

"Why did you hope? To want something and to strive for it is something I can understand, but whoever hopes?"

"You have won the bet, but not entirely," he said, with a sneer.

The mazurka began. Grushnitsky invited none but the Princess, other cavaliers chose her every minute; it was obviously a conspiracy against me—but that was all for the better. She wanted to talk with me; she was prevented from doing so—good! She would want to all the more.

I pressed her hand once or twice; the second time she pulled her hand away without a word.

"I shall sleep badly tonight," she said to me when the mazurka was over.

"Grushnitsky is to blame for that."

"Oh no!" And her face grew so pensive, so sad, that I promised myself I would kiss her hand that night.

Everybody began to disperse. Having helped the Princess into her carriage, I quickly pressed her little hand to my lips. It was dark and no one could see.

I returned to the hall highly pleased with myself.

The young gallants were having supper around a large table, Grushnitsky among them. When I entered they all fell silent; they must have been talking about me. Ever since the previous ball many of them, the captain of dragoons in particular, have had a bone to pick with me, and now it seems that a hostile band is being organized against me under Grushnitsky's command. He wears such a cocky, bravura air.

I am very glad of it, for I love enemies, though not in the Christian way. They amuse me and quicken my pulse. To be always on one's guard, to catch every look and the significance of every word, to guess intentions, foil conspiracies, pretend to be deceived and then to overthrow with one blow the whole vast edifice of artifices and designs raised with so much effort—that is what I call life.

Throughout the meal Grushnitsky spoke in whispers and exchanged winks with the captain of dragoons.

June 14

This morning Vera left for Kislovodsk with her husband. Their carriage passed me as I was on my way to Princess Ligovskaya's. She nodded to me; there was a reproach in her eyes.

Who is to blame, after all? Why does she not want to give me an opportunity to see her alone? Love, like fire, dies out without fuel. Perhaps jealousy will succeed where my pleadings have failed.

I stayed a whole hour at the Princess'. Mary did not come down—she was indisposed. In the evening she did not appear on the boulevard. The newly-formed gang had armed itself with lorgnettes and looked formidable indeed. I am glad that the Princess was ill, for they would have affronted her in some way. Grushnitsky's hair was dishevelled and he looked desperate; he actually seems to be embittered, his vanity especially has been wounded. But some people are really amusing even when desperate!

On returning home I felt a vague longing. *I had not seen her! She was ill!* Have I actually fallen in love? What nonsense!

At eleven o'clock in the morning, at which hour Princess Ligovskaya usually sweats it out at the Yermolov baths, I walked past her house. Princess Mary was sitting at the window lost in thought; on seeing me, she jumped to her feet.

I walked into the anteroom; there was no one around and taking advantage of the freedom of the local custom, I went straight to the drawing-room without being announced.

A dull pallor had spread over the Princess' charming features. She stood by the piano, leaning with one arm on the back of a chair; the arm trembled slightly. Quietly I walked up to her and said:

"Are you angry with me?"

She raised her eyes to me with a deep, languorous look and shook her head; her lips wanted to say something, but could not; her eyes filled with tears; she sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands.

"What is the matter?" I said, taking her hand.

"You do not respect me! Oh, leave me alone!"

I stepped back a few paces. She stiffened in the chair and her eyes flashed....

I paused, my hand on the door knob, and said:

"I beg your pardon, Princess! I acted rashly ... it will not happen again, I shall see to it. Why should you know what has been going on in my heart? You shall never know it, which is all the better for you. Farewell."

As I went out I thought I heard her sobbing.

Until evening I wandered about the environs of Mashuk, tired myself out thoroughly and on returning home flung myself on the bed in utter exhaustion.

Werner dropped in to see me.

"Is it true," he asked, "that you intend to marry Princess Ligovskaya?"

"Why do you ask?"

"The whole town is talking about it. All my patients can think of nothing else but this important news, and these watering place crowds know everything!"

"This is Grushnitsky's little joke!" thought I.

"To prove to you, doctor, how unfounded these rumours are, I shall tell you in confidence that I am going to Kislovodsk tomorrow."

"And Princess Mary as well?"

"No, she will remain here another week."

"So you do not intend to marry?"

"Doctor, doctor! Look at me: do I look like a bridegroom or anything of the kind?"

"I am not saying you do.... But, you know, it sometimes happens," he added, smiling slyly, "that a man of honour is obliged to get married, and that there are fond mamas who at least do not prevent such eventualities from arising.... So as a friend, I advise you to be more cautious. The air is highly dangerous here at the waters. How many splendid young men worthy of a better fate have I seen leave here bound straight for the altar. Believe it or not, they wanted to marry me off, too. It was the doing of one provincial mama with a very pale daughter. I had the misfortune to tell her that the girl would regain her colour after the nuptials; whereupon with tears of gratitude in her eyes she offered me her daughter's hand and all her property—fifty souls, I believe it was. I told her, however, that I was quite unfit for matrimony."

Werner left fully confident that he had given me a timely warning.

I could tell by what he had said that diverse malicious rumours had been spread all over town about the Princess and myself: Grushnitsky will have to pay for this!

June 18

It is three days since I arrived in Kislovodsk. I see Vera every day at the spring or on the promenade. When I wake up in the morning I sit at the window and direct a lorgnette at her balcony. Having dressed long before, she waits for the signal agreed upon, and we meet as if by accident

in the garden which slopes down to the spring from our houses. The invigorating mountain air has returned colour to her face and given her strength. It is not for nothing that Narzan is called the spring of giants. The local inhabitants claim that the air in Kislovodsk is conducive to love and that all the love affairs that ever began at the foot of Mashuk have invariably reached their denouement here. And indeed, everything here breathes of solitude; everything is mysterious—the dense shadows of the avenues of lime-trees hanging over the torrent, which, falling noisily and frothily from flag to flag, cleaves its way through the green mountains, and the gorges, full of gloom and silence, that branch out from here in all directions, and the freshness of the fragrant air laden with the aroma of the tall southern grasses and the white acacia, and the incessant deliciously drowsy babble of the cool brooks which, mingling at the end of the valley, rush onward to hurl their waters into the Podkumok. On this side the gorge is wider and spreads out into a green depression, and through it meanders a dusty road. Each time I look at it, I seem to see a carriage approaching and a pretty rosy-cheeked face looking out of its window. Many a carriage has already rolled along that road—but there still is no sign of that particular one. The settlement beyond the fort is now densely populated; from the restaurant built on a hill a few paces from my apartment lights have begun to glimmer in the evenings through the double row of poplars, and the noise and the clinking of glasses can be heard until late at night.

Nowhere is there so much Kakhetian wine and mineral water quaffed as here.

To jumble up such various kinds of fun
*There's many take delight: for me, I am not one.**

Grushnitsky and his gang carouse daily in the saloon. He hardly ever greets me now.

* From Griboyedov's comedy *Wit Works Woe.*

He arrived only yesterday, but he has already managed to pick a quarrel with three old men who wanted to take their baths before him. Bad luck is decidedly developing a bellicose spirit in him.

June 22

At last they arrived. I was sitting at the window when I heard their carriage drive up, and my heart bounded. What does it mean? Could I be in love? So senselessly am I constituted that it might indeed be expected of me.

I had dinner with them. Princess Ligovskaya eyed me very tenderly and did not leave her daughter's side—a bad sign that! But Vera is jealous of Princess Mary; I have managed to achieve that felicitous state after all! What would not a woman do to hurt a rival! I recall a woman who loved me simply because I was in love with another. Nothing is more paradoxical than the feminine mind: it is hard to convince women of anything, they must be brought to a point where they will convince themselves. The method of adducing the evidence with which they annihilate their prejudices is highly original, and to come to know their dialectics one must overthrow in one's mind all the academic rules of logic. For example, the ordinary method is this:

This man loves me; but I am married; hence, I must not love him.

The feminine method is this:

I must not love him, because I am married; but he loves me, and hence....

Here follows a pregnant pause, for reason is now dumb, and all the talking is mainly done by the tongue, eyes, and eventually the heart, if there is one.

What if these notes fall into a woman's hands some day? "Libel!" she will cry indignantly.

Ever since poets began to write and women to read them (for which they must be heartily thanked), the latter have been called angels so often that in the simplicity of their hearts they have actually come to believe in

this compliment, forgetting that for money the very same poets exalted Nero as a demigod.

It might appear unseemly that I should speak of them with such malice —I, who have never loved anything else under the sun, I, who have always been ready to sacrifice my peace of mind, ambition and life for their sake.... Yet it is not in a fit of annoyance or injured vanity that I endeavour to draw aside that magic veil which only the accustomed eye can penetrate. No, all that I say about them is only the result of

The mind's reflections coldly noted,
*The bitter insights of the heart.**

Women should wish all men to know them as well as I do, for I have loved them a hundred times more since I overcame my fear of them and discovered their petty frailties.

Incidentally, Werner the other day compared women with the enchanted forest described by Tasso in his "Jerusalem Delivered."

"You have but to approach it," he said, "to be assaulted from all sides by ungodly terrors: duty, pride, respectability, public opinion, ridicule, contempt.... You must not heed them, but go straight on; little by little the monsters vanish and before you opens a quiet, sunny glade with green myrtle blooming in its midst. But woe to you if your heart quails when you take those first steps and you turn back!"

June 24

This evening was replete with events. Some three versts out of Kislovodsk, in the gorge where the Podkumok flows, there is a crag called *The Ring*, forming a natural gateway that towers above a high hill; through it the setting sun casts its last fiery glance at the world. A large cavalcade set out to watch the sunset through the rocky window. To tell the truth, though, none of the people who came along thought of the sunset. I rode next to

* From Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin.*

Princess Mary. On the way back we had to ford the Podkumok. Even the smallest mountain streams are dangerous chiefly because their bottoms are a perfect kaleidoscope, changing day after day under the action of the current; where there was a rock yesterday there may be a pit today. I took the Princess' horse by the bridle and led it to the water, which did not rise above the knees; we started crossing slowly at an angle against the current. It is a well-known fact that in crossing rapids one should not look at the water because it makes you dizzy. I forgot to warn Princess Mary of this.

We were already in midstream, where the current is the swiftest, when she suddenly began to sway in the saddle. "I feel faint!" she gasped. Quickly I bent over toward her and put my arm around her supple waist.

"Look up!" I whispered to her. "Don't be afraid, it's quite all right; I am with you."

She felt better and wanted to free herself from my arm, but I tightened my embrace about her soft slender waist; my cheek almost touched hers; I could feel its fiery glow.

"What are you doing? My God!"

I paid no heed to her quivering confusion, and my lips touched her soft cheek; she started, but said nothing. We were riding behind the others; no one saw us. When we clambered ashore, everyone set off at a trot. The Princess, however, reined in her horse, and I remained with her; it was obvious that she was worried by my silence, but I swore to myself not to say a word—out of sheer curiosity. I wanted to see how she would extricate herself from the embarrassing situation.

"Either you despise me or you love me very much," she said at last in a voice that shook with tears. "Perhaps you wish to mock at me, play on my feelings, and then leave me.... That would be so vile, so low, that the very thought.... Oh no! Surely," she added with an air of tender trustfulness, "there is nothing in me that would preclude respect, is there? Your presumptuous conduct.... I must, I must forgive you because I suffered it.... Answer me, speak to me, I want to hear your voice!" There was so

much womanly impetuosity in her last words that I could not suppress a smile; luckily, it was growing dark. I did not reply.

"You have nothing to say?" she continued. "Perhaps you wish me to be the first to say that I love you?"

I was silent.

"Do you want me to do that?" she went on, swiftly turning toward me. There was something awe-inspiring in the earnestness of her eyes and voice.

"Why should I?" I replied, shrugging my shoulders.

She struck her horse with her riding crop and set off at full gallop along the narrow, dangerous road; it all happened so quickly that I was hardly able to overtake her, and did so only when she had already joined the rest of the company. All the way home she talked and laughed incessantly. There was a feverishness in her movements; and not once did she look at me. Everybody noticed this unusual gaiety. Princess Ligovskaya rejoiced inwardly as she watched her daughter; but her daughter was merely suffering a fit of nerves and would spend a sleepless night weeping. The very thought gives me infinite pleasure; there are moments when I understand the Vampire.... And yet I have the reputation of being a good fellow and try to live up to it!

Having dismounted, the ladies went in to Princess Ligovskaya's. I was agitated and galloped into the hills to dispel the thoughts that crowded into my mind. The dewy evening breathed a delicious coolness. The moon was rising from behind the darkly looming mountain pinnacles. Every step my unshod horse took echoed dully in the silence of the gorges. I watered my horse at a waterfall, eagerly drank in the invigorating air of the southern night, and retraced my steps. I rode through the village. Lights were going out in the windows; sentries on the ramparts of the fort and Cossack pickets on the outposts hallooed to each other on a sustained note.

I noticed that one of the houses in the village which had been built on the brink of a gully was unusually brightly lit, and every now and then I could hear a babble of voices and shouting which betokened an armymen's

carousal. I dismounted and crept up to the window; a loose shutter made it possible for me to see the revellers and overhear what they were saying. They were talking about me.

The captain of dragoons, flushed with wine, pounded the table with his fist to command attention.

"Gentlemen!" he said. "This won't do at all. Pechorin must be taught a lesson. These Petersburg whippersnappers get uppish until they're rapped on the knuckles! Just because he always wears clean gloves and shiny boots he thinks he's the only society man around."

"And that supercilious smile of his! Yet I'm certain he's a coward—yes, a coward!"

"I believe so too," said Grushnitsky. "He turns everything into a joke. Once I told him off in such terms that another man would have cut me down on the spot, but Pechorin just laughed it off. I, of course, didn't challenge him, because it was up to him to do so; besides I did not want to bother. . . ."

"Grushnitsky is wild because he stole a march on him with the Princess," said someone.

"What nonsense! True, I did run after the Princess a bit, but I gave it up soon enough because I have no desire to marry and I do not believe in compromising a girl."

"Yes, I assure you he is a coward of the first water, Pechorin I mean, not Grushnitsky. Grushnitsky is a fine chap and a good friend of mine to boot!" said the captain of dragoons. "Gentlemen! Does anyone here want to stand up for him? No one? All the better! Do you wish to test his courage? It will be amusing. . . ."

"We do. But how?"

"Now listen to me: since Grushnitsky's grievance is the biggest, his shall be the leading role. He will take exception to some trifle and challenge Pechorin to a duel. . . . Wait, this is the point. . . . He will challenge Pechorin—so far so good! Everything, the challenge, the preparations and the conditions will be made in as solemn and awe-inspiring a fashion as possible —I shall take care of that, for I'll be your second, my poor friend! Very

well! Now this is the trick: we will not load the pistols. I give you my word Pechorin will show the white feather—six paces from one another I'll place them, damn it! Are you agreeable, gentlemen?"

"Grand idea, splendid! What a lark!" came from all sides.

"And you, Grushnitsky?"

I awaited Grushnitsky's reply with trepidation; a cold fury gripped me at the thought that mere chance had saved me from being made the butt of these fools' jest. Had Grushnitsky not agreed to it, I would have flung myself on his neck. After a brief silence, however, he rose from his seat, extended his hand to the captain and said very pompously: "Very well, I agree."

The elation of the whole honourable company defies description.

I returned home a prey to two conflicting emotions. One was sadness. Why do they all hate me? I thought. Why? Had I offended anybody? No. Can it be that I am one of those whose mere appearance excites ill will? And I felt a venomous wrath gradually take possession of me. Take care, Mr. Grushnitsky, I said to myself as I paced up and down the room, you cannot trifle thus with me. You might have to pay dearly for the approbation of your stupid comrades. I am not a toy for you to play with! . . .

I lay awake all night. In the morning I looked as yellow as an orange.

Early in the day I met Princess Mary at the spring.

"Are you ill?" she asked, looking at me intently.

"I did not sleep all night."

"Neither did I.... I blamed you ... unjustly perhaps? But if you would only explain I could forgive you everything."

"Everything?"

"Yes, everything.... Only you must tell the truth ... be quick.... You see, I have gone over it again and again, trying to find some explanation that would justify your conduct. Perhaps you fear opposition on the part of my relatives? There is nothing to worry about that; when they hear of it ... (her voice trembled) I shall persuade them. Or, perhaps, it is your own position ... but I want you to know that I am capable of sacrificing

everything for the sake of the man I love.... Oh, answer me quickly—have pity on me.... Tell me, you don't despise me, do you?"

She seized my hand.

Princess Ligovskaya was walking ahead of us with Vera's husband and saw nothing; but we could have been observed by the patients who were strolling about, and they are the most inquisitive of all inquisitive gossips, so I quickly disengaged my hand from her passionate clasp.

"I shall tell you the whole truth," I said, "without trying to justify myself or to explain my actions. I do not love you."

Her lips paled slightly.

"Leave me," she said in a barely audible voice.

I shrugged my shoulders, turned, and walked away.

June 25

Sometimes I despise myself; is that why I despise others too? I am no longer capable of noble impulses; I am afraid of appearing ridiculous to myself. Anyone else would have offered the Princess *son cœur et sa fortune* but for me the word *marriage* has an odd spell: no matter how passionately I might love a woman it is farewell to love if she as much as hints at my marrying her. My heart turns to stone, and nothing can warm it again. I would make any sacrifice but this; twenty times I can stake my life, even my honour, but my freedom I shall never sell. Why do I prize it so much? What do I find in it? What am I aiming at? What have I to expect from the future? Nothing, absolutely nothing. It is some innate fear, an inexplicable foreboding.... After all, some people have an unreasoning fear of spiders, cockroaches, mice.... Shall I confess? When I was still a child, some old woman told my fortune for my mother, predicting that I would *die through a wicked wife.* It made a deep impression on me at the time, and an insuperable abhorrence for marriage grew within me. And yet something tells me that her prophecy will come true; but at least I shall do my best to put off its fulfilment as long as possible.

Apfelbaum, the conjurer, arrived here yesterday. A long poster appeared on the restaurant doors informing the worthy public that the above-named amazing magician, acrobat, chemist and optician would have the honour to present a magnificent spectacle this day at eight o'clock in the evening in the hall of the Nobles' Club (otherwise the restaurant); admission two rubles and a half.

Everybody intends to go and see the amazing conjurer; even Princess Ligovskaya has taken a ticket for herself, although her daughter is ill.

As I was walking past Vera's windows today after dinner—she was sitting on the balcony alone—a note fell at my feet:

"Come tonight at ten o'clock in the evening by the main staircase; my husband has gone to Pyatigorsk and will not be back until tomorrow morning. My menservants and chambermaids will not be in: I gave them all, as well as the Princess' servants, tickets to the show. I shall wait for you; come without fail."

"Aha!" thought I. "At last I am having my way."

At eight o'clock I went to see the conjurer. It was nearly nine when the audience had assembled and the performance began. In the back rows I recognized the lackeys and chambermaids of both Vera and the Princess. They were all there. Grushnitsky was sitting in the first row with his lorgnette. The conjurer turned to him each time he needed a handkerchief, watch, ring, or the like.

Grushnitsky has not bowed to me for some time, and now he eyed me rather insolently once or twice. He shall rue it when the time comes to settle scores.

It was nearly ten when I rose and went out.

It was pitch black outside. Heavy, chill clouds lay on the summits of the surrounding mountains, and only now and then did the dying breeze

rustle the tops of the poplars around the restaurant. People were crowding at the windows. I went down the hill and, after turning into the gate, quickened my pace. Suddenly I felt that someone was following me. I stopped and looked around. It was too dark to see anything, but for the sake of caution I walked around the house as if merely out for a stroll. As I passed Princess Mary's windows I again heard footsteps behind me, and a man wrapped in a greatcoat ran past me. This worried me; nevertheless I crept up to the porch and hurried up the dark staircase. The door opened; a little hand seized mine....

"No one saw you?" Vera whispered, clinging to me.

"No!"

"Now do you believe that I love you! Oh, I have hesitated so long, tormented myself so long ... but I am as clay in your hands."

Her heart pounded, and her hands were cold as ice. Then followed reproaches and jealous recriminations—she demanding a full confession, vowing she would meekly endure my faithlessness, for her only desire was to see me happy. I did not quite believe that but, nevertheless, reassured her with vows, promises, and so on.

"So you are not going to marry Mary? You don't love her? And she thinks ... do you know she is madly in love with you, the poor thing!..."

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

At about two o'clock in the morning I opened the window and, knotting two shawls together, let myself down from the upper balcony to the lower, holding on to a column as I did so. A light was still burning in Princess Mary's room. Something impelled me toward that window. The curtains were not drawn tight and I was able to cast a curious glance into the interior of the room. Mary was sitting on her bed, her hands crossed on her knees; her abundant tresses had been gathered under a lace night cap; a large scarlet shawl covered her white shoulders, and her tiny

feet were concealed in a pair of brightly coloured Persian slippers. She sat motionless, her head sunk on her breast; on a table before her lay an open book, but her fixed gaze, full of inexpressible sadness, seemed to be skimming one and the same page for the hundredth time while her thoughts were far away....

Just then someone moved behind a bush. I jumped down to the lawn from the balcony. An invisible hand seized me by the shoulder. "Aha!" said a gruff voice. "Got you! I'll teach you to go prowling in princesses' rooms at night!"

"Hold him fast!" yelled another, leaping from behind the corner.

They were Grushnitsky and the captain of dragoons.

I struck the latter on the head with my fist, knocking him down, and ran for the bushes. I knew all the paths in the garden covering the slope opposite our houses.

"Thieves! Help!" they shouted; a shot was fired; the glowing wad fell almost at my feet.

A minute later I was in my own room, undressed and in bed. My manservant had scarcely locked the door when Grushnitsky and the captain began pounding on it.

"Pechorin! Are you asleep? Are you there?" the captain shouted.

"I'm in bed," I replied testily.

"Get up! Thieves! The Cherkess!"

"I have a cold," I replied, "I'm afraid of aggravating it."

They went away. I should not have answered them; they would have spent another hour searching for me in the garden. In the meantime a fearful hue and cry was raised. A Cossack galloped down from the fort. Everything was agog; Cherkess were being hunted for in every bush, but of course, none were found. Many probably carried off the firm conviction, however, that had the garrison displayed greater courage and speed at least a dozen or two marauders would have been left on the spot.

June 27

The Cherkess night raid was the sole subject of conversation at the spring this morning. Having imbibed the prescribed number of glasses of Narzan and walked some ten times up and down the long linden avenue, I met Vera's husband, who had just returned from Pyatigorsk. He took my arm and we went into the restaurant for breakfast. He was exceedingly worried about his wife. "She had a terrible fright last night!" he said. "A thing like this would have to happen just when I was away!" We sat down for breakfast near the door leading to the corner room, which was occupied by a dozen gallants, Grushnitsky among them. And for the second time Providence offered me an opportunity to overhear a conversation that was to decide his fate. He did not see me, and hence I could not conclude that he was talking deliberately for my benefit; but that only enhanced his guilt in my eyes.

"Could it really have been the Cherkess?" said someone. "Did anyone see them?"

"I'll tell you the whole truth," replied Grushnitsky, "only I ask you not to give me away. This is what happened: last night a man, whose name I shall not mention, came to me with the story that he had seen someone sneaking into the Ligovsky house at about ten at night. Let me remind you that Princess Ligovskaya was here at the time, and Princess Mary at home. So I set out with him to lay in wait for the lucky fellow under her window."

I admit I was alarmed lest my companion, engrossed though he was with his breakfast, should hear some rather unpleasant things if Grushnitsky had guessed the truth. Blinded by jealousy, however, the latter did not even suspect what had happened.

"So you see," Grushnitsky continued, "we set off taking along a gun loaded with a blank charge in order to give the fellow a fright. Until two o'clock we waited in the garden. Finally he appeared, the Lord knows from where, only it wasn't through the window because it did not open—he

probably came through the glass door hidden behind a column—finally, I say, we saw somebody climbing off the balcony.... What do you think of the Princess, eh? I must admit these Moscow ladies are beyond me! What can you believe in after this? We tried to seize him, but he broke loose and scurried for the bushes like a hare; that's when I shot at him."

A murmur of incredulity broke out around Grushnitsky.

"You do not believe me?" he continued. "I give you my word of honour that this is the downright truth, and to prove it, perhaps, I shall mention the name of the gentleman in question."

"Who was it, who was it?" came from all sides.

"Pechorin," replied Grushnitsky.

At that moment he raised his eyes—to see me standing in he doorway facing him; he flushed scarlet. I stepped up to him and said very slowly and distinctly:

"I am very sorry that I entered after you had already given your word of honour in confirmation of the most abominable piece of slander. My presence might have saved you from that added villainy."

Grushnitsky leapt to his feet, all ready to flare up.

"I beg of you," I continued in the same tone of voice, "I beg of you to retract at once what you have said; you are very well aware that it is a lie. I do not believe that the indifference of a woman to your brilliant qualities deserves such severe retaliation. Think it over well: if you persist in your opinion, you forfeit your right to a reputation of a man of honour and risk your life."

Grushnitsky stood before me, eyes downcast, in violent agitation. But the struggle between conscience and vanity was brief. The captain of dragoons, who was sitting next to him, nudged him with his elbow; he started and quickly replied to me without raising his eyes:

"My dear sir, when I say something I mean it, and am ready to repeat it.... Your threats do not intimidate me and I will stick at nothing."

"The last you have already proved," I replied coldly, and taking the arm of the captain of dragoons, led him out of the room.

"What do you wish with me?" asked the captain.

"You are a friend of Grushnitsky's and will probably be his second?"

The captain bowed with much hauteur.

"You have guessed right," he replied. "Moreover, I am obliged to be his second, for the insult you have offered him concerns me too... I was with him last night," he added, squaring his stooping shoulders.

"Ah, so it was you I hit so clumsily on the head?"

He went yellow, then blue; suppressed anger showed on his face.

"I shall have the honour to send my second to you shortly," I added, bowing very politely and pretending to ignore his fury.

On the steps of the restaurant I met Vera's husband. He had evidently been waiting for me.

He seized hold of my hand with something akin to rapture.

"Noble-minded young man!" he said with tears in his eyes. "I heard everything. What a scoundrel! The ingrate! Just think of admitting them into a respectable home after this! Thank God I have no daughters! But she for whom you are risking your life will reward you. You may be assured of my discretion for the time being," he continued. "I was young once myself and served in the army; I know one must not interfere in affairs like this. Good-bye!"

Poor fellow! He is glad that he has no daughters....

I went straight to Werner, whom I found at home, and told him everything—my relations with Vera and the Princess and the conversation I had overheard which apprised me of these gentlemen's intentions to make a fool of me by having us shoot it out with blank charges. Now, however, the affair had overstepped the bounds of a joke; they probably had not expected it to end like this.

The doctor agreed to act as my second. I gave him a few instructions concerning the conditions of the duel; he was to insist on the greatest secrecy, for though I am always ready to risk my life, I am not disposed in the slightest to spoil my future in this world for all time to come.

Afterwards I went home. An hour later the doctor returned from his expedition.

"There indeed is a conspiracy against you," he said. "I found the captain of dragoons and another gentleman whose name I do not remember at Grushnitsky's. I stopped for a moment in the hallway to take off my galoshes; inside there was a terrific noise and argument going on. 'I will not agree on any account!' Grushnitsky was saying. 'He insulted me publicly; at that time it was an entirely different matter. . . .' 'Why should it concern you?' replied the captain. 'I am taking everything upon myself. I have been a second in five duels and know how these things are arranged. I have thought it out in every detail. Only be so good as not to interfere with me. It will do good to give him a fright. And why should you run a risk if you can avoid it?' At that point I walked in. They immediately fell silent. Our parleys lasted for quite a while, and finally we came to the following arrangement: about five versts from here there is a lonely gorge; they will go there tomorrow morning at four o'clock, and we are to leave half an hour later. You will fire at six paces—Grushnitsky insisted on that distance himself. The dead man is to be credited to the Cherkess. Now I will tell you what I suspect: they, the seconds, I mean, have apparently amended the earlier scheme somewhat and want to put a bullet only into Grushnitsky's pistol. It looks rather like murder, but cunning is permitted in wartime, particularly in an Asiatic war. I daresay though that Grushnitsky is slightly better than his comrades. What do you think? Should we let them know that we have guessed their stratagem?"

"Not for anything in the world, doctor! You can rest assured I shall not give in to them."

"What do you intend to do?"

"That is my secret."

"Take care you do not fall into the trap. . . . Remember the distance is only six paces!"

"Doctor, I shall expect you tomorrow at four. The horses will be saddled. Good-bye!"

I sat at home until evening, locked up in my room. A footman came with an invitation from Princess Ligovskaya, but I said I was ill.

. . . . . .

It is two o'clock in the morning, but I cannot fall asleep. I know I should rest, so that my hand should be steady tomorrow. It will be hard to miss at six paces though. Ah, Mr. Grushnitsky, your hoax will not succeed! We shall exchange roles, and now it will be for me to look for signs of secret terror on your pallid face. Why did you insist on these fatal six paces? You think that I shall submissively offer you my brow as a target ... but we shall draw lots! And then ... then ... but what if fortune smiles on him? What if my star fails me at last? And little wonder if it did; it has served me faithfully so long.

Ah, well! If I must die, I must! The world will lose little, and I am weary enough of it all. I am like a man who yawns at a ball and does not go home to sleep only because his carriage has not come. But the carriage is here—good-bye!

I run through my past life in my mind and involuntarily ask myself: Why have I lived? For what purpose was I born? I daresay there was a purpose, and I daresay, fate had something noble in store for me, for I am conscious of untapped powers within me.... But I did not divine my predestination, I allowed myself to be carried away by the temptation of vain and ignoble passions; I emerged from their crucible hard and cold like iron, but gone forever was the ardour of noble aspirations—life's finest flower. How often since then have I played the role of an axe in the hands of fate! Like that instrument of punishment I have fallen upon the heads of the condemned, often without malice, always without regret... My love has never made anyone happy, for I have never sacrificed anything for those I loved; I have loved only for myself, for my own pleasure; I have striven only to satisfy a strange craving of the heart, greedily absorbing their emotions, their tenderness, their joys and sufferings—and have never been sated. I have been like the starving man who falls into a stupor from sheer exhaus-

tion and dreams of luxurious viands and sparkling wines; exultingly he gorges himself on these ephemeral gifts of the imagination, and seems to feel better; but when he awakes the vision is gone . . . and redoubled hunger and despair remain!

Perhaps I shall die tomorrow, and there will not be a creature left on earth who understands me fully. Some think of me worse, others better, than I really am. Some will say: he was a good fellow; others: he was a scoundrel. And both will be wrong. Is it worth the trouble to live after this? And yet you go on living—out of curiosity, in expectation of something new. . . . How ludicrous and how vexatious!

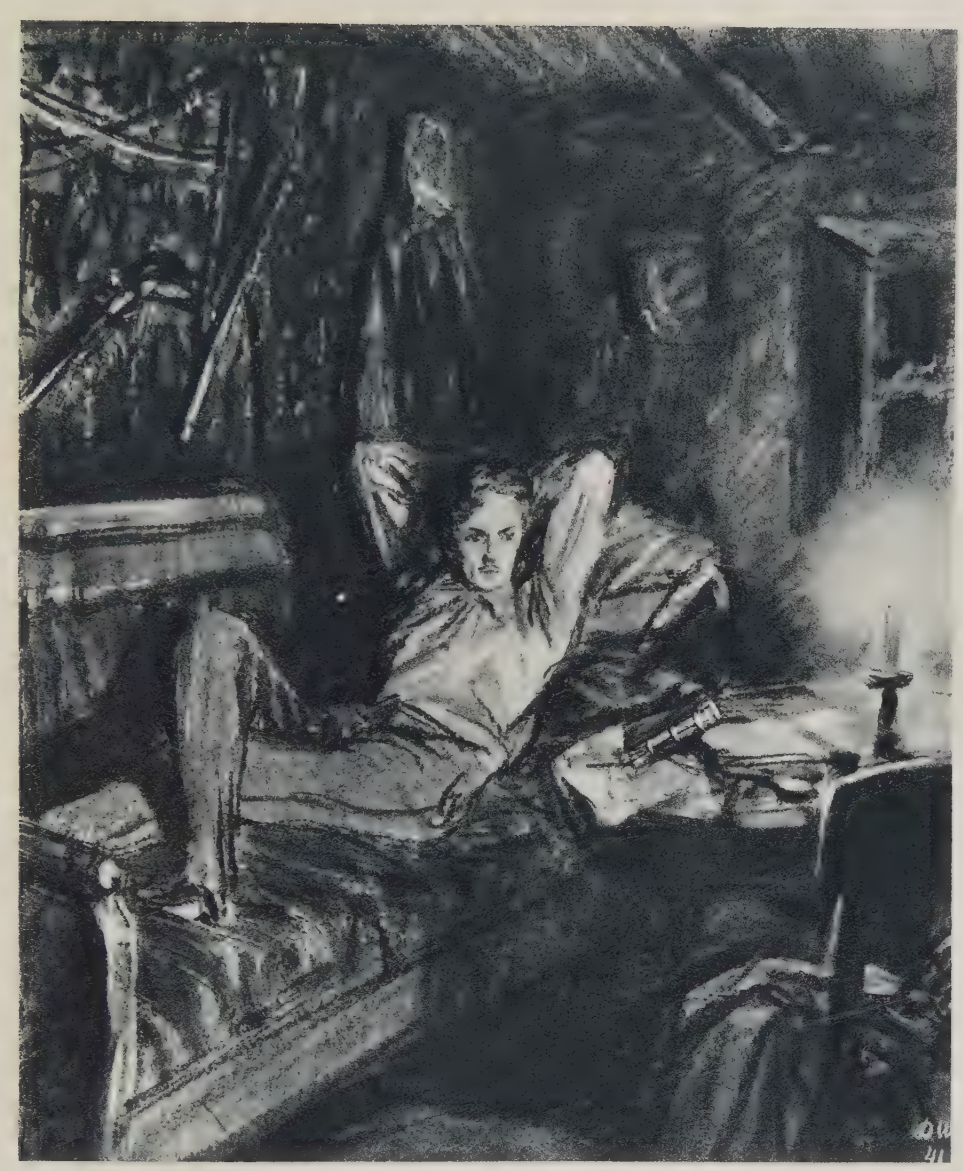
A month and a half has passed since I arrived at the fort of N. Maxim Maximych has gone out hunting. . . . I am all alone. I am sitting at the window; outside the grey clouds have concealed the mountains to their very base; the sun looks like a yellow blotch through the mist. It is cold; the wind is soughing and rattling the shutters. . . . How wearisome it all is! I shall resume writing my journal which has been interrupted by so many queer events.

Reading over the last page, it strikes me as humorous. I thought I would die, but that was out of the question, for I had not drained my cup of misery to the dregs, and now I feel that I still have long to live.

How clearly and sharply everything that has happened is imprinted in my memory! Time has not obliterated a single line or shade.

I recall that on the night preceding the duel I did not sleep a wink. A mysterious disquietude seized me and I could not write for long. For about an hour I paced the room; then I sat down and opened a novel by Walter Scott that had lain on my table: it was *Old Mortality*. At first I read with an effort, then, carried away by the enchanting fiction, I was soon oblivious to everything.

At last day broke. My nerves had grown calm. I examined my face in the mirror: a dull pallor had spread over my features which still showed traces of a racking sleepless night, but my eyes, though encircled by dark shadows, shone proudly and remorselessly. I was satisfied with myself.



Ordering the horses to be saddled, I dressed and hurried to the baths. As I immersed myself in the cold Narzan water, I felt my physical and spiritual strength returning. I left the baths as refreshed and vigorous as if about to attend a ball. After this no one can tell me that the soul is not dependent on the body!

On returning home I found the doctor there. He was wearing grey riding breeches, a light caftan gathered in at the waist and a Cherkess cap. I burst out laughing at the sight of his slight frame beneath the enormous shaggy cap. His countenance is anything but warlike, and this time he looked more dejected than usual.

"Why so sad, doctor?" I said to him. "Haven't you seen people off to the next world a hundred times with the greatest indifference? Imagine that I have a bilious fever, and that I have equal chances of recovering or succumbing; both eventualities are in the order of things; try to regard me as a patient stricken with a disease you have not yet diagnosed—that will stimulate your curiosity to the utmost. You may now make some important physiological observations on me.... Is not expectation of death by violence a real illness in itself?"

This thought impressed the doctor and his spirits rose.

We mounted. Werner clung to the reins with both hands and we set off. In a flash we had galloped through the settlement and past the fort and entered the gorge through which a road wound its way. It was half overgrown with tall grass and intersected at short intervals by noisy brooks which we had to ford to the great despair of the doctor whose horse would halt each time in the water.

I cannot remember a morning bluer or fresher. The sun had barely peeped over the green summits and the merging of the first warmth of its rays with the dying coolness of the night brought a sweet languor to the senses. The exultant ray of the young day had not yet penetrated into the gorge; now it gilded only the tips of the crags that towered above us on both sides. The dense foliage of the bushes growing in the deep crevices of the cliffs showered a silvery rain upon us at the slightest breath of wind.

I remember that at that moment I loved nature as never before. With what curiosity did I gaze at each dew-drop that trembled on the broad vine leaves, reflecting millions of rainbow rays! How eagerly my eyes sought to pierce the hazy distance! There the path grew narrower and narrower, the crags bluer and more awesome, seeming to merge at last into an impregnable wall. We rode along in silence.

"Have you made your will?" Werner asked all of a sudden.

"No."

"What if you are killed?"

"The heirs will turn up themselves."

"Have you no friends you would wish to send your last farewell?"

I shook my head.

"Is there no woman in the world to whom you would want to leave a remembrance?"

"Do you want me to lay bare my soul to you, doctor?" I replied. "You see, I am past the years when people die with the names of their beloved on their lips and bequeath a lock of pomaded, or unpomaded, hair to a friend. When I think of imminent and possible death, I think only of myself; some do not even do that. Friends, who will forget me tomorrow, or, worse still, who will weave God knows what fantastic yarns about me, and women, who in the embrace of another will laugh at me in order that he might not be jealous of the departed—what do I care for them? From life's turmoil I have drawn a few ideas, but no feeling. For a long time now I have been living by my reason, not my heart. I weigh and analyze my own emotions and actions with stern curiosity, but without sympathy. There are two men in me; one lives in the full sense of the word, the other reasons and passes judgment on the first. The first will, perhaps, take leave of you and the world forever an hour from now, and the second ... the second.... Look, doctor, do you see the three dark figures on the cliff to the right? I believe they are our adversaries."

We spurred our horses on.

Three horses were tethered in the bushes at the foot of the cliff. We tethered ours there too and continued on foot up a narrow path to a ledge where Grushnitsky was waiting for us with the captain of dragoons and another second by the name of Ivan Ignatych; his surname I had never heard.

"We have been waiting a long time for you," said the captain of dragoons, with an ironical smile.

I pulled out my watch and showed it to him.

He apologized, saying that his watch was fast.

For several minutes there was an awkward silence. At last the doctor broke it, turning to Grushnitsky:

"I believe," he said, "that having both shown your readiness to fight and thereby duly discharged your debt of honour, you might, gentlemen, come to an understanding and end this affair amicably."

"I am ready to do so," said I.

The captain winked at Grushnitsky, who thinking that I was showing the white feather assumed a haughty air, although his face had been sickly grey until that moment. Now for the first time since our arrival he looked at me; the glance was uneasy and betrayed his inner conflict.

"Tell me your conditions," he said, "and you may rest assured that I shall do all I can for you. . . ."

"These are my conditions: you will today publicly retract your calumny and apologize to me. . . ."

"My dear sir, I am amazed that you dare suggest anything of the kind. . . ."

"What else could I suggest?"

"We shall shoot it out."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"So be it; only remember that one of us is bound to be killed."

"I hope it will be you."

"And I am quite certain of the contrary."

He started and flushed red, and then he forced a laugh.

The captain took him by the arm and led him aside; they spoke in whispers at some length. I had arrived quite peaceably disposed, but now these proceedings were getting on my nerves.

The doctor came up to me.

"Look here," he said, obviously worried, "have you forgotten about their conspiracy? I do not know how to load a pistol, but if that is the case.... You are a queer man! Tell them you are aware of their intentions, and they will not dare.... Where's the sense of it? They will shoot you down like a fowl...."

"Please, doctor, do not alarm yourself, and wait a little.... I shall handle it so that they will not have any advantage. Let them whisper...."

"Gentlemen, this is becoming tiresome!" I said to them in a loud voice. "If we are to fight, let us do so; you had time yesterday to talk it over...."

"We are ready," replied the captain. "Take your places, gentlemen! Doctor, will you measure off six paces?"

"Take your places!" repeated Ivan Ignatych in a squeaky voice.

"I beg your pardon!" I said. "There is one more condition. Inasmuch as we intend to fight to the death, we are obliged to take every precaution that this encounter should remain a secret and that our seconds should bear no responsibility. Do you agree?"

"We agree fully."

"This is what has occurred to me. Do you see the narrow ledge on top of that sheer cliff to the right? The drop from there to the bottom is a good thirty sagenes, if not more; down below there are jagged rocks. Each of us will take his position on the very edge of the shelf, which will make even a slight wound mortal; that should coincide with your wishes since you yourselves set the distance at six paces. If one of us is wounded he will inevitably go over and be dashed to pieces; the doctor will remove the bullet, and the sudden death can easily be explained as an accident. We shall draw lots to see who is to shoot first. In conclusion I wish to make it clear that I shall fight on no other terms."

"Let it be so!" said the captain after a meaning look at Grushnitsky, who nodded his concurrence. His facial expression changed every moment. I had placed him in a difficult position. Under ordinary conditions, he could have aimed at my leg and wounded me lightly, thus getting his revenge without laying too heavy a burden on his conscience. Now, however, he either had to fire into the air or become a murderer, or, finally, abandon his dastardly scheme and run the same risk as I. I would not have wished to be in his boots at that moment. He led the captain aside and began to talk to him very heatedly; I noticed how his lips, now turned bluish, quivered. The captain, however, turned away from him with a contemptuous smile. "You are a fool!" he said to Grushnitsky rather loudly. "You don't understand anything. Let us go, gentlemen!"

A narrow path winding between the bushes led up the steep incline; broken fragments of rock formed the precarious steps of this natural staircase; clutching at the bushes, we began climbing. Grushnitsky went ahead, followed by his seconds, and the doctor and I came last.

"You amaze me," said the doctor, clasping my hand warmly. "Let me feel your pulse. Oho, it's pounding feverishly! But your face betrays nothing; only your eyes shine brighter than usual."

Suddenly small stones rolled noisily down to our feet. What had happened? Grushnitsky had stumbled; the branch he had been holding on to snapped and he would have fallen backwards had his seconds not supported him.

"Take care!" I called out to him. "Don't fall too soon; it's an ill omen. Remember Julius Caesar!"

Finally we reached the top of the projecting cliff. The ledge was covered with fine sand as if specially spread there for the duel. All around, wrapped in the golden mist of morning, the mountain peaks clustered like a numberless herd, while in the south Elbrus loomed white, bringing up the rear of a chain of icy summits among which roamed the feathery clouds blown in from the east. I walked to the brink of the ledge and looked down; my head nearly swam. Down below it was dark and cold as in a

grave, and the moss-grown jagged rocks hurled down by storm and time awaited their prey.

The ledge on which we were to fight formed an almost regular triangle. Six paces were measured off from the projecting angle, and it was decided that he who would first have to face his opponent's fire should stand at the very edge with his back to the abyss; if he was not killed, the adversaries were to change places.

I decided to give Grushnitsky every advantage, for I wanted to try him; a spark of generosity might have been awakened in his soul, in which case everything would have turned out for the best; but vanity and weakness of character were bound to triumph.... I wanted to give myself full justification for allowing him no quarter if fate spared me. Who has not thus struck a bargain with his conscience?

"Cast the lots, doctor!" said the captain.

The doctor produced a silver coin from his pocket and held it aloft.

"Tail!" cried Grushnitsky suddenly, like a man just awakened by a friendly nudge.

"Head!" said I.

The coin rose into the air and came down with a clink; we all rushed over to look at it.

"You're lucky," I said to Grushnitsky, "you are to shoot first. But remember, if you do not kill me, I shall not miss—I give you my word of honour."

He flushed; the thought of killing an unarmed man filled him with shame. I looked at him intently, and for a moment I thought he would throw himself at my feet and beg my forgiveness; but how could he confess to a scheme so vile? One way out remained for him: to fire into the air; I was certain he would fire into the air! Only one thing might prevent him from doing so: the thought that I might demand a second duel.

"It's time now!" the doctor whispered to me, tugging at my sleeve. "If you will not tell them now that we know their intention all will be lost. See, he is loading already. If you will not, I shall tell them...."

"Certainly not, doctor!" I replied, holding him by the arm. "You will spoil everything; you gave me your word you would not interfere.... And why should it concern you? Perhaps I want to be killed."

He looked at me in amazement.

"Oh, that's another matter! Only don't blame me in the other world...."

Meanwhile the captain had loaded his pistols. One he gave Grushnitsky, smilingly whispering something to him, the other to me.

I took my place at the far corner of the ledge, firmly bracing my left foot against the rock and leaning slightly forward so as not to fall backwards in case I was lightly wounded.

Grushnitsky took his place opposite me, and when the signal was given, started to raise the pistol. His knees shook. He aimed straight at my forehead....

Savage anger welled up in my heart.

Suddenly he lowered the muzzle of his pistol and going as white as a sheet turned to his second.

"I cannot do it," he said hoarsely.

"Coward!" replied the captain.

The shot rang out. The bullet scratched my knee. Involuntarily I took a few steps forward to get away from the brink as quickly as possible.

"Well, brother Grushnitsky, it is a pity you missed!" said the captain. "Now it's your turn, take your place! Embrace me before you go, for we shall meet no more!" They embraced, the captain scarcely able to restrain himself from laughter. "Don't be afraid," he added, with a sly look at Grushnitsky, "everything in the world's a pack of nonsense! Nature, fate, life itself, all are but worthless pelf!"

This tragic utterance made with due solemnity, the captain withdrew to his place. With tears in his eyes, Ivan Ignatych also embraced Grushnitsky, and now the latter remained alone facing me. To this day I have tried to explain to myself the emotion that then surged in my breast: it was the

vexation of injured vanity, and contempt, and wrath born of the realization that this man who was now eyeing me so coolly, with such calm insolence, two minutes before had sought to kill me like a dog without endangering himself in the slightest, for had I been wounded a little more severely in the leg I would certainly have toppled over the cliff.

I looked him squarely in the face for a few minutes, trying to detect the slightest sign of repentance. Instead I thought I saw him suppressing a smile.

"I advise you to say your prayers before you die," I told him then.

"You need not be more concerned about my soul than your own. I only beg of you to fire with the least delay."

"And you will not retract your slander? Or apologize to me? Think well, has your conscience nothing to say to you?"

"Mr. Pechorin!" shouted the captain of dragoons. "You are not here to preach, allow me to observe.... Let us get it over and done with as quickly as possible. Someone might ride through the gorge and see us."

"Very well. Doctor, will you come to me?"

The doctor came over. Poor doctor! He was paler than Grushnitsky had been ten minutes before.

I spoke the following words with deliberation, loudly and distinctly, as sentences of death are pronounced:

"Doctor, these gentlemen, no doubt in their haste, forgot to put a bullet into my pistol; I beg you to reload it—and well!"

"It can't be!" cried the captain. "It can't be! I loaded both pistols; the bullet may have rolled out of yours.... That's not my fault! And you have no right to reload ... no right whatsoever .... it is most decidedly against the rules. I shall not allow it...."

"Good!" I said to the captain. "If so, you and I shall shoot it out on the same terms...."

He did not know what to say.

Grushnitsky stood there, head sunk on his breast, embarrassed and gloomy.

"Let them do as they wish!" he finally told the captain, who was trying to wrench my pistol from the doctor's hand. "You know yourself that they are right."

In vain the captain made signs to him; Grushnitsky did not even look up.

Meanwhile the doctor loaded the pistol and handed it to me.

Seeing this, the captain spat and stamped his foot. "You are a fool, my friend," he said, "a damned fool. Once you trusted me, you should have listened to me in everything.... You are getting what you deserve, so go ahead and die like a fly!" He turned away, muttering, "but it is altogether against the rules."

"Grushnitsky!" said I. "There still is time; retract your calumny and I shall forgive you everything. You have failed to make a fool of me, and my vanity is satisfied. Remember that once we were friends...."

His face twisted with passion, his eyes flashed.

"Fire!" he replied. "I despise myself and hate you. If you do not kill me, I shall stab you in the back some night. The world is too small to hold us both...."

I fired.

When the smoke cleared, there was no Grushnitsky on the ledge. Only a thin pillar of dust curled over the brink of the precipice.

Everybody cried out at once.

"*Finita la commedia!*" I said to the doctor.

He did not reply, but turned away in horror.

I shrugged my shoulders and bowed to Grushnitsky's seconds.

As I came down the path I saw Grushnitsky's bloodstained corpse between the clefts in the rocks. Involuntarily I closed my eyes.

Untying my horse, I set out for home at a walking pace. My heart was heavy within me. The sun seemed to have lost its brilliance and its rays did not warm me. Before reaching the settlement I turned into a gorge on

my right. I could not have endured to see anyone just then; I wanted to be alone. With the reins hanging loose and my head sunk on my breast, I rode on for some time until I found myself in an entirely unfamiliar spot. I turned back and sought the roadway. The sun was setting when I reached Kislovodsk, a spent man on a spent horse.

My manservant told me that Werner had called and gave me two notes, one from him, and the other from Vera.

I opened the first; it contained the following:

"Everything has been arranged as well as possible; the mutilated body has been brought in, and the bullet removed from the breast. Everybody believes that his death was accidental; only the commandant, who probably knows of your quarrel, shook his head, but said nothing. There is no evidence against you and you may rest in peace . . . if you can. Good-bye. . . ."

I hesitated long before opening the second note. What could she have to write to me? An ominous presentiment racked my soul.

Here it is, that letter whose every word ineffaceably seared itself into my memory:

"I am writing to you quite certain that we shall never meet again. When we parted several years ago, I thought the same; but it pleased heaven to try me a second time; I did not withstand the test, my weak heart was again conquered by that familiar voice . . . but you will not despise me for it, will you? This letter is at once a farewell and a confession: I must tell you everything that has been stored in my heart ever since it first learned to love you. I shall not accuse you—you behaved to me as any other man might have done; you loved me as your property, as a source of the reciprocal joys, fears and sorrows without which life would be wearisome and monotonous. I realized that from the very beginning. . . . But you were unhappy, and I sacrificed myself in the hope that some day you would appreciate my sacrifice, that some day you would understand my infinite tenderness which nothing

could affect. Much time has passed since then; I have fathomed all the secrets of your soul... and I see that mine was a vain hope. How it hurt me! But my love and my soul have melted into one: the flame is dimmer, but it has not died.

"We are parting forever; yet you may be certain that I shall never love another; my soul has spent all its treasures, its tears and hopes on you. She who has once loved you cannot but regard other men with some measure of contempt, not because you are better than they—oh no!—but because there is something unique in your nature, something peculiar to you alone, something so proud and unfathomable; whatever you may be saying, your voice holds an invincible power; in no one is the desire to be loved so constant as in you; in no one is evil so attractive; in no one's glance is there such a promise of bliss; nobody knows better than you how to use his advantages, and no one else can be so genuinely unhappy as you, because nobody tries as hard as you to convince himself of the contrary.

"Now I must explain the reason for my hasty departure; it will strike you as of little consequence because it concerns me alone.

"This morning my husband came to me and told me about your quarrel with Grushnitsky. My face must have given me away, for he looked me straight in the eyes, long and searchingly; I nearly fainted at the thought that you would have to fight a duel and that I was the cause; I thought I would lose my mind.... Now, however, when I can reason clearly, I am certain that you will live; it is impossible that you should die without me, impossible! My husband paced the room for a long time; I do not know what he said to me, nor do I remember what I replied.... I probably told him that I loved you.... I only remember that at the end of our conversation he insulted me with a terrible word and left the room. I heard him order the carriage.... For three hours now I have been sitting at the window and awaiting your return.... But you are alive, you cannot die! The carriage is almost ready.... Farewell, farewell! I am lost—but what of it? If

I could be certain that you will always remember me—I say nothing of loving me, no—only remember.... Good-bye! They are coming.... I have to hide this letter....

"You do not love Mary, do you? You will not marry her? Oh, but you must make this sacrifice for me; I have given up everything in the world for your sake...."

Like a madman I dashed outside, leapt into the saddle of my horse who was being led across the courtyard, and set off at full gallop along the road to Pyatigorsk. I mercilessly spurred on the exhausted beast which, panting and covered with froth, sped me along the rocky road.

The sun had vanished into a black cloud resting on the mountain range in the west, and it turned dark and damp in the gorge. The Podkumok picked its way through the rocks with a dull and monotonous roar. Breathless with impatience I galloped on. The thought that I might not find her in Pyatigorsk pounded like a sledge-hammer at my heart. Oh, but to see her for a minute, only one more minute, to say good-bye, to clasp her hand.... I prayed, I cursed, I cried, I laughed ... no, no words can express my anxiety, my despair. Now that I realized I might lose her forever, Vera became for me the most precious thing on earth, more precious than life, honour or happiness! God only knows what odd, wild ideas swarmed in my head.... And all the while I rode on, spurring my horse mercilessly. Finally I noticed that the animal was breathing more laboriously, and once or twice he stumbled on a level stretch. There still remained five versts to Essentuki, a Cossack hamlet where I could get another mount.

Everything would have been redeemed had my horse had the strength to carry on for another ten minutes. But suddenly, at a sharp bend in the road coming up from a shallow ravine as we were emerging from the hills, he crashed to the ground. I leapt nimbly out of the saddle; but try as I might to get him up, pull as I might at the reins, my efforts were in vain. A scarcely audible groan escaped from between his clenched teeth and a few minutes later he was dead. I was left alone in the steppe, my last hope gone; I tried to continue on foot, but my knees gave way and exhausted by

the day's anxieties and the sleepless night, I fell onto the wet grass and wept like a child.

I lay there for a long time motionless and wept bitterly without trying to check the tears and sobs; I thought my breast would be rent asunder. All my resolution, all my composure vanished like smoke; my spirit was impotent, my reason paralyzed, and had someone seen me at that moment he would have turned away in contempt.

When the nocturnal dew and mountain breeze had cooled my fevered brow and my thoughts became collected once more, I realized it was useless and senseless to pursue a happiness that was lost. What more did I want? To see her? Why? Was not everything over between us? One bitter farewell kiss would not make my memories sweeter, and it only would be the harder to part.

It is pleasant for me to know, however, that I can weep! Although, the real reason was perhaps frayed nerves, the sleepless night, the two minutes I had stood looking at the muzzle of a pistol, and an empty stomach.

Everything works out for the best. As for this new sensation of pain, it served as a happy diversion, to employ a military term. It does one good to weep, and had I not ridden my horse to death and then been compelled to walk the fifteen versts back, I perhaps should not have closed my eyes that night either.

I returned to Kislovodsk at five o'clock in the morning, threw myself on the bed and slept like Napoleon after Waterloo.

When I woke up, it was dark outside. Unfastening my jacket, I sat at an open window—and the breeze from the mountains cooled my breast not yet becalmed even by the heavy sleep of fatigue. Way out beyond the river the lights of the fort and the village twinkled through the thick crowns of the overshadowing lindens. The courtyard was deadly still, and the Princess' house plunged into darkness.

The doctor entered. His brow was furrowed, and contrary to his wont he did not offer me his hand.

"Where have you come from, doctor?"

"From Princess Ligovskaya's. Her daughter is ill—nervous breakdown.... But that's not why I am here; the trouble is that the authorities are beginning to suspect, and though nothing definite can be proved I would advise you to be more cautious. The Princess just told me that she was aware you fought a duel because of her daughter. That old man—what's his name?—told her. He witnessed your altercation with Grushnitsky in the restaurant. I came to warn you. So good-bye—perhaps we shall not see each other again—very likely you'll be sent away."

He paused on the threshold; he wanted to shake my hand. And had I given him the slightest encouragement he would have flung himself on my neck; but I remained as cold as a stone, and he went away.

That is just like human beings! They are all alike; though fully aware in advance of all the evil aspects of a deed, they aid and abet and even give their approbation to it when they see there is no other way out—and then they wash their hands of it and turn away with disapproval from him who dared assume the full burden of responsibility. They are all alike, even the kindest and wisest of them!

The following morning, when I had received orders from my superiors to report at the fort of N., I dropped in at the Princess' to say good-bye.

Princess Ligovskaya was taken aback when in reply to her question whether I had anything important to tell her I merely said that I had come to say good-bye.

"I must have a very serious talk with you, however."

I sat down without saying a word.

It was obvious she was at a loss how to begin; her face went red and she drummed her stubby fingers on the table. Finally she began haltingly:

"Monsieur Pechorin, I believe you are an honourable man."

I bowed.

"I am even certain of it," she continued, "though your conduct has been somewhat questionable. You may have your reasons, however, of which

I am not aware, and if so, you must share them with me now. You protected my daughter from calumny, engaged in a duel on her behalf, and risked your life in doing so.... Pray do not reply, for I know you will not admit it because Grushnitsky is dead." (She crossed herself.) "God forgive him, and you too, I hope! That is none of my concern.... I have no right to condemn you, for it was my daughter, blameless though she is, who was the cause. She has told me everything ... everything, I am sure. You have declared you love her, and she has confessed her love for you." (Here the Princess drew a deep sigh.) "But she is ill and I am certain that it is not an ordinary malady. Some secret grief is killing her; she does not admit it, but I am certain that you are the cause.... Listen to me: you perhaps think that I am after rank and immense riches—if so, you are mistaken; I seek only my daughter's happiness. Your present position is unenviable, but it may mend. You are wealthy; my daughter loves you, and her upbringing is such that she can make her husband happy. I am rich, and she is my only child.... Tell me, what is it that deters you? I should not have told you all this, but I rely upon your heart and honour—remember that I have only one daughter ... only one...."

She began to sob.

"Princess," I said, "I cannot answer you; allow me to speak to your daughter alone."

"Never!" she cried, rising from her chair in great agitation.

"As you wish," replied I, preparing to leave.

She thought it over, motioned me to wait, and left the room.

Some five minutes passed; my heart pounded, but my thoughts were orderly and my head cool. Search as I might in my breast for even the tiniest spark of love for the charming Mary, all my efforts were in vain.

The door opened and she entered. Heavens! How she had changed, since I saw her last—and that but a short while ago!

When she reached the middle of the room she swayed; I leapt to her side, offered her my arm and led her to an arm-chair.

I stood facing her. For a long time neither of us said a word; her big eyes full of ineffable sorrow seemed to search mine with something akin to hope; in vain her pale lips tried to smile; her delicate hands folded on her knees were so fragile and transparent that I began to feel sorry for her.

"Princess," said I, "you know I have mocked at you, do you not? You must despise me."

A feverish flush mantled her cheeks.

"Hence, you cannot love me. . . ." I continued.

She turned away, leaned her elbows on the table and covered her eyes with her hand, and I thought I saw tears glistening in them.

"My God!" she said scarcely audibly.

The situation grew unbearable; in another minute I should have thrown myself at her feet.

"So you see for yourself," I said in as steady a voice as I could, forcing a smile, "you see for yourself that I cannot marry you. Even if you wished me to do so now, you would regret the decision very soon. The talk I had with your mother compels me to speak with you now so frankly and brutally; I hope she is mistaken but you can easily undeceive her. As you can see I am playing a most contemptible and disgusting role in your eyes, and I admit it; that is the most I can do for you. However bad your opinion may be of me, I shall accept it. You see I am abasing myself before you. . . . Even if you had loved me, you would despise me from this moment—now, wouldn't you?"

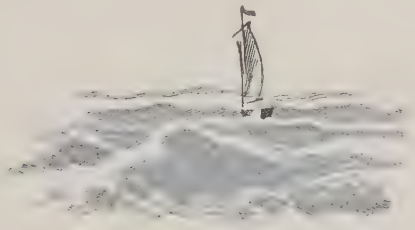
She turned to me a face as pale as marble but with eyes flashing wondrously.

"I hate you . . ." she said.

I thanked her, bowed respectfully and walked out.

An hour later a post troika was carrying me rapidly from Kislovodsk. A few versts from Essentuki I descried the carcase of my steed by the roadside; the saddle had been removed—probably by some passing Cossack—and in its place two ravens now sat on the horse's back. I sighed and turned away. . . .

And now, here in this dreary fort, as my mind dwells on the past, I frequently ask myself: why did I not wish to tread the path fate held open to me with a promise of tranquil joys and peace of mind? No, I could never have reconciled myself to such a lot. I am like a mariner born and bred on board a buccaneer brig whose soul has become so inured to storm and strife that if cast ashore he would weary and languish no matter how alluring the shady groves and how bright the gentle sun. All day long he paces the sandy beach, hearkening to the monotonous roar of the breakers and gazing into the hazy distance to catch in the pale strip dividing the blue deep from the grey clouds the flash of the long-awaited sail that at first is like the wing of a sea-gull and then gradually stands out from the white of the spray as it steadily makes for its lonely anchorage. . . .



III

THE FATALIST

I HAPPENED once to spend two weeks in a Cossack village on the left flank. A battalion of infantry was stationed there, and the officers used to meet at each other's quarters in turn, playing cards in the evenings.

On one occasion at Major C.'s, having tired of Boston we threw the cards under the table and sat on talking until late, for this time the conversation was interesting. We were discussing the Moslem belief that the fate of man is preordained in heaven, which was said to find many adherents among us. Each of us had some unusual occurrences to relate pro or contra.

"All you have been saying, gentlemen, proves nothing," said the old major. "After all, none of you witnessed any of the strange happenings you adduce to support your views, did you?"

"Of course not," several said. "But we have it on reliable authority!"

"Nonsence!" someone said. "Where is the reliable authority who has seen the scroll on which our mortal hour is written? And if there is such a

thing as predestination, why have we been given will and reason? Why are we held accountable for our actions?"

Meanwhile an officer who had been sitting in a corner of the room rose, walked slowly over to the table and surveyed us all with a calm, solemn glance. He was a Serbian by birth, as you could tell by his name.

Lieutenant Vulic's appearance was in keeping with his character. His tall stature and swarthy complexion, black hair, black piercing eyes, and the large but regular nose typical of his nation, the cold, melancholy smile that eternally played on his lips—all this was as if designed to endow him with the appearance of an unusual person incapable of sharing his thoughts and emotions with those whom fate had made his comrades.

He was brave, he spoke little but bluntly; he confided his intimate and family secrets to no one; he scarcely ever drank any wine, and he never paid court to the young Cossack women, whose charms must be seen to be appreciated. It was said, nevertheless, that the colonel's wife was smitten by his expressive eyes; but he was always angered by hints to that effect.

There was only one passion he did not conceal—his passion for gambling. At a green-topped table he was oblivious to the world. He usually lost, but persistent bad luck only fed his obstinacy. It was said that one night during an expedition when he was keeping the bank on a pillow and having a terrific run of luck, shots suddenly rang out, the alarm was given, and everyone sprang up and rushed for their arms. "Stake the pool!" cried Vulic, who had not moved, to one of the most ardent punters. "Seven!" replied the latter as he dashed off. In spite of general confusion, Vulic dealt to the end; he turned up punter.

When he reached the skirmish line the firing was already heavy. Vulic paid no attention either to the bullets or the Chechen sabres; he was searching for his lucky punter.

"It was a seven!" Vulic shouted catching sight of him at last in a line of skirmishers who were beginning to dislodge the enemy from a wood, and going up to him pulled out his purse and wallet and gave them to the

winner in spite of the latter's objections to this ill-timed settlement. Having performed this unpleasant duty, Vulic dashed forward at the head of the soldiers and to the very end of the engagement fought the Chechens with the utmost coolness.

When Lieutenant Vulic walked up to the table everybody fell silent, expecting as usual something original.

"Gentlemen!" he said (his voice was calm though it was pitched lower than usual). "Gentlemen, why this idle argument? You wish for proof: I propose we test it on ourselves whether a man can dispose of his own life or whether the fateful moment has been preordained for each of us.... Who wants to try?"

"Not I, not I!" was the response from all sides. "What a queer fellow! Of all the things to think of!"

"I suggest a wager," I said in jest.

"What sort of a wager?"

"I claim there is no such thing as predestination," I said, emptying some twenty gold pieces on the table from my pockets—all that I happened to have on me.

"Done!" replied Vulic in a low voice. "Major, will you be the umpire; here are fifteen gold pieces; you owe me five, so will you do me the favour of making up the difference?"

"Very well," said the major. "Though I haven't the slightest idea what it's all about, or how you propose to settle the matter."

Without a word Vulic went into the major's bedroom, we following him. Going over to a wall hung with weapons, he took down at random one of the pistols, of which there were several of different calibres. We did not realize what he was up to at first; but when he cocked the weapon and primed it, several of us involuntarily cried out and seized him by the arms.

"What are you going to do? Are you mad?" they shouted at him.

"Gentlemen!" he said with deliberation, disengaging his arms. "Which of you would care to pay twenty gold pieces for me?"

Everyone fell silent and drew back.

Vulic went into the next room and sat down at the table; the rest of us followed him. He motioned us to take our seats around the table. We obeyed him in silence, for at this moment he acquired some mysterious power over us. I looked intently into his eyes, but they met my searching gaze calmly and unwaveringly, and his pale lips smiled; but in spite of his composure I thought I could read the seal of death on his pallid face. I have observed, and many old soldiers have confirmed the observation, that frequently the face of a person who is to die in a few hours' time bears some strange mark of his inevitable fate which a practised eye can scarcely fail to detect.

"You will die today," I said to him. He turned sharply to me, but replied with calm deliberation:

"I may, and then again I may not...."

Then, turning to the major, he asked whether the pistol was loaded. In his confusion, the major could not remember exactly.

"That's enough, Vulic!" someone cried. "It must be loaded once it hung at the head of the bed. What sort of a joke is this!"

"A stupid joke!" threw in another.

"I'll wager fifty to five that the pistol is not loaded!" a third shouted.

Fresh bets were made.

This endless ceremony began to pall on me. "Look here," I said, "either fire or hang the pistol back in its place and let's go to bed."

"That's right," many exclaimed. "Let's go to bed."

"Gentlemen, I beg of you not to move!" said Vulic, pressing the muzzle of the pistol to his forehead. We were all petrified.

"Mr. Pechorin," he went on, "will you take a card and throw it up in the air."

As I recall now, I picked up an ace of hearts from the table and threw it up; with bated breath and eyes expressive of terror and a vague curiosity we glanced from the pistol to the fateful ace which was now slowly fluttering downwards. The moment it touched the table, Vulic pulled the trigger—but the pistol missed fire.

"Thank God!" several voices cried. "It was not loaded. . . ."

"We shall see about that," said Vulic. Again he cocked the weapon and aimed at a forage cap hanging over the window; a shot rang out and smoke filled the room; and when it dispersed the forage cap was taken down—there was the hole in the very centre of it and the bullet had imbedded itself deep in the wall.

For a good three minutes no one could utter a word; Vulic calmly poured my money into his purse.

Speculation began as to why the pistol did not go off the first time; some claimed that the pan must have been clogged, others whispered that the powder was damp at first, and that Vulic had afterwards sprinkled some fresh powder on it; I, however, assured them that the latter supposition was not just, for I had not taken my eyes off the pistol for a moment.

"You have gambler's luck!" I said to Vulic.

"For the first time in my life," he replied, smiling complacently. "This is better than faro or shtoss."

"But slightly more dangerous."

"Well? Have you begun to believe in predestination?"

"I do believe in it. Only I do not understand why it seemed to me that you were doomed to die today. . . ."

The very same man who so short a time before had with supreme indifference aimed a pistol at his own forehead now suddenly flared up and looked disconcerted.

"That will do!" he said, rising. "Our wager is finished and now your remarks seem out of place to me. . . ." He picked up his cap and walked out. His behaviour struck me as queer—and rightly so.

Soon everyone left, each giving his own interpretation of Vulic's eccentric behaviour on the way home, and, probably, unanimously branding me an egoist for having wagered with a man who wanted to shoot himself; as if he could not have found a convenient opportunity without my help!

I returned home through the deserted sidestreets of the settlement; the full moon, red as the grow of a conflagration, was just coming up over the

jagged skyline of the housetops; the stars shone placidly in the dark-blue firmament, and I was amused at the thought that there once were sages who believed the heavenly bodies have a share in our wretched squabbles over a bit of territory or some other imaginary rights. Yet these lamps, which they thought had been lighted only to illuminate their battles and triumphs, still burn with undiminished brilliance, while their passions and hopes have long since died out together with them like a campfire left burning on the fringe of a forest by a careless wayfarer. But what strength of will they drew from the certainty that all the heavens with their numberless inhabitants looked down on them with constant, though mute, sympathy! Whereas we, their wretched descendants, who roam the earth without convictions or pride, without joys or fear other than the nameless dread that constricts the heart at the thought of the inevitable end, we are no longer capable of great sacrifices either for the good of mankind or even for our personal happiness since we know that happiness is impossible; and we pass indifferently from one doubt to another just as our forebears floundered from one delusion to another, without the hopes they had and without even that vague but potent sense of joy the soul derives from any struggle with men or destiny....

Many similar thoughts passed through my mind; I did not retard their passage, because I do not care to dwell upon abstract ideas—for what can they lead to? In my early youth I was a dreamer; I liked to woo the images, now gloomy, now radiant, which my restless, eager imagination drew for me. But what have I derived from it all? Only weariness, like the aftermath of a nocturnal battle with a phantom, and dim memories filled with regrets. In this futile struggle I exhausted the warmth of soul and the constancy of will which are essential to an active life; when I embarked on that life, I had already lived it through in my thoughts, and hence it has become as boring and repulsive to me as a travesty of a long-familiar book.

The evening's events had made a rather deep impression on me and worked on my nerves. I am not certain whether I now believe in predestina-

tion or not, but that night I firmly believed in it. The proof had been striking, and regardless of the fact that I had ridiculed our forebears and their complaisant astrology, I found myself thinking as they did; but I caught myself in good time on this dangerous road, and having made it a rule never to reject anything categorically and never to believe in anything blindly, I cast metaphysics aside and began to watch the ground under my feet. The caution was timely, for I nearly stumbled over something thick and soft but apparently inanimate. I bent down—the moon now lit up the road—and what did I see lying in front of me but a pig sliced into two with a sabre.... I had hardly had time to look at it when I heard footsteps: two Cossacks came running from a sidestreet. One of them came up to me and asked whether I had seen a drunken Cossack pursuing a pig. I told them that I had not met the Cossack, but showed them the unlucky victim of his violent prowess.

"The bandit!" said the second Cossack. "As soon as he drinks his fill of *chikhir** he's out to cut up everything that comes his way. Let's go after him, Yeremeich; we've got to tie him up, or else...."

They went off and I continued on my way more warily than before, at last reaching my quarters safe and sound.

I was staying with an old Cossack non-commissioned officer whom I liked because of his kindly nature and particularly because of his pretty daughter, Nastya.

She was waiting for me as usual at the gate, wrapped in a fur coat; the moon shone on her sweet lips, now blue from the cold of the night. Seeing me, she smiled, but I had other things on my mind. "Good night, Nastya," I said, passing by. She was about to say something in reply, but sighed instead.

I locked the door of my room, lighted a candle and flung myself on the bed; tonight, however, sleep eluded me longer than usual. The east was already beginning to grow pale when I fell asleep, but evidently the heavens

* A young wine.

had ordained that I was not to sleep this night. At four o'clock in the morning two fists banged at my window. I sprang up; what was the matter? "Wake up and get dressed!" several voices shouted. I dressed hastily and went out. "Do you know what's happened?" the three officers who had come for me said to me in chorus; they were as pale as death.

"What?"

"Vulic has been killed."

I was stupefied.

"Yes, killed!" they went on. "Let us go quickly."

"Where to?"

"We'll tell you on the way."

We set off. They told me everything that had happened, adding to the story various observations concerning the strange fatality that had saved Vulic from certain death half an hour before he died. The Serbian had been walking alone along a dark street when the drunken Cossack who had slashed up the pig bumped into him, and might perhaps have gone on without paying any attention to him had Vulic not stopped suddenly and said:

"Whom are you looking for, brother?"

"You!" the Cossack answered, striking him with his sabre and cleaving him from the shoulder nearly to the heart.... The two Cossacks whom I had seen and who were pursuing the murderer reached the spot, and picked up the wounded man, but he was already breathing his last and uttered only the words: "He was right!" I alone understood the ominous portent of these words; they referred to me. I had involuntarily predicted the poor man's fate; my instinct had not failed me; I had indeed read on his altered features the stamp of imminent death.

The murderer had locked himself in a vacant cottage at the far end of the settlement, and thither we went. A large number of women were running in the same direction, crying as they went. Every now and then a Cossack sprang belatedly out of a cottage hurriedly buckling on a dagger and ran past us. There was a fearful commotion.

At last we arrived on the scene to find a crowd gathered around the cottage whose doors and shutters had been fastened from the inside. Officers and Cossacks were holding a heated argument; the women were wailing and lamenting. Among them I noticed an old woman whose face expressed frantic despair. She was seated on a thick log, her elbows on her knees and her hands supporting her head; she was the murderer's mother. At times her lips moved ... was it with a prayer or a curse?

In the meantime some decision had to be made and the malefactor apprehended. But no one had the pluck to go in first.

I went up to the window and looked in through a crack in a shutter. The man lay on the floor, holding a pistol in his right hand; a blood-stained sabre lay beside him. His face was pale, and his expressive eyes rolled fearfully; at times he shuddered and clutched at his head as if hazily recollecting the happenings of the previous day. There did not seem to be much resolution in his uneasy glance and I told the major that there was no reason why he should not order the Cossacks to break the door in and rush the cottage, for it would be better to do so now rather than later when the man would have fully recovered his senses.

Just then an old captain of the Cossacks went up to the door and called to the man inside by name; the latter responded.

"You've sinned, brother Yefimych," said the Cossack captain. "So there's nothing for it but to give yourself up!"

"I won't!" replied the Cossack.

"Fear God's wrath! You are not a heathen Chechen, you're an honest Christian. You've gone astray and it can't be helped. You can't escape your fate!"

"I won't give up!" the Cossack shouted menacingly, and we could hear the click of the pistol as he cocked it.

"Hey, mother!" the Cossack captain said to the old woman. "You speak to your son, maybe he will listen to you.... After all, this sort of thing is only defying God. Look, the gentlemen have been waiting for two hours now."

The old woman looked at him intently and shook her head.

"Vasili Petrovich," said the Cossack captain, walking up to the major, "he will not give himself up—I know him. And if we break in the door, he will kill many of our men. Wouldn't it be better if you ordered him to be shot? There is a wide crack in the shutter."

At that moment a queer thought flashed in my mind; like Vulic, I thought of putting fate to a test.

"Wait," I said to the major, "I'll take him alive." Telling the Cossack captain to engage him in conversation and stationing three Cossacks at the entrance with instructions to break in the door and to rush to my assistance as soon as the signal was given, I walked around the cottage and approached the fateful window, my heart pounding.

"Hey there, you wretch!" shouted the Cossack captain. "Are you mocking at us or what? Or maybe you think we won't be able to take you." He began hammering at the door with all his strength, while I, pressing my eye to the chink, followed the movements of the Cossack inside who did not expect attack from this side, then suddenly wrenched off the shutter and threw myself into the window head first. The pistol went off next to my ear and the bullet tore off an epaulette. The smoke that filled the room, however, prevented my adversary from finding his sabre, which lay beside him. I seized him by the arms; the Cossacks broke in, and in less than three minutes the criminal was tied up and led off under guard. The people dispersed and the officers congratulated me—and indeed they had reason to do so.

After all this how could one possibly avoid becoming a fatalist? But who knows for certain whether he is convinced of anything or not? And how often we mistake a deception of the senses or an error of reason for conviction!

I prefer to doubt everything; such a disposition does not preclude a resolute character; on the contrary, as far as I am concerned, I always advance more boldly when I do not know what is awaiting me. After all, nothing worse than death can happen—and death you cannot escape!

On returning to the fort I told Maxim Maximych everything I had seen and experienced, and wanted to hear his opinion about predestination. At first he did not understand the word, but I explained it to him as best I could, whereupon he said, significantly shaking his head:

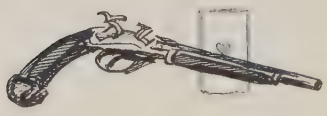
"Yes, sir! It's a queer business that! By the way, these Asiatic pistol cocks often miss fire if they are poorly oiled or if you don't press hard enough with your finger. I must admit I don't like the Cherkess rifles either; they are a bit inconvenient for the likes of us; the butt is so small that unless you watch out you may get your nose scorched.... Their sabres now are a different matter—I take off my hat to them!"

Then he added after brief reflection:

"Yes, I'm sorry for the poor chap.... Why the devil did he stop to talk with a drunk at night! But, I suppose, that was his destiny!"

I got nothing more out of him; in general he does not care for metaphysical discourses.

THE END



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